

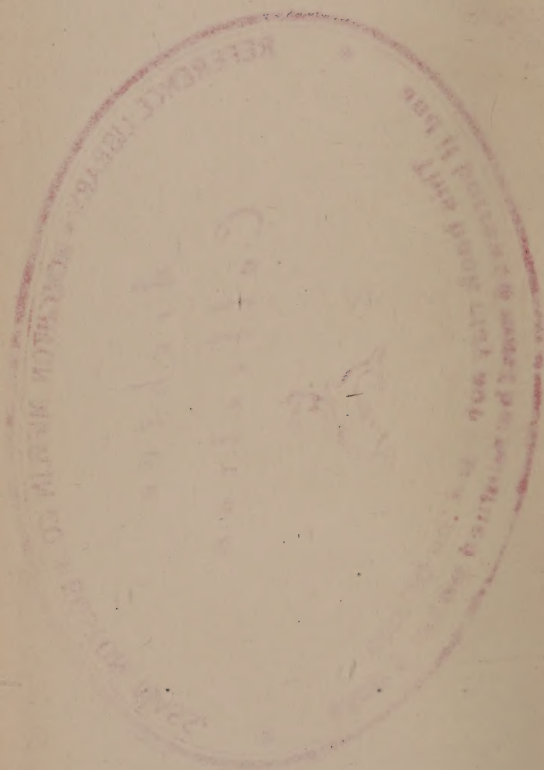


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FABLES IN SONG.

FABLES IN SONG.

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'POEMS BY OWEN MEREDITH,' 'LUCILE,' &c.



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PART I.



INTRODUCTORY.



I.

HAD I miss'd my way? It would seem so. Still,
Scarce past is an hour of the matin prime
Since safe I was sitting in front of the mill;
Where my first walk ever, this pure May time,
Under the beeches, and round by the rill,
'Twixt brawling ripple, and rustling bough,
Hath its wonted end, by the brook; that, now
When the sweet birds sing together,
Carolling clear in the cool, comes down
From the breezy hills, and the sunburnt heather;
Guided about to his goal unknown
By a glimmer of primrose buds new blown,
And their breath on the balmy weather.

II.

Well, there by the mill, as I say,
Where, between them, the brook and the bough
For my sake make a musical bower,
Safe I sat in the morn of the day;
And since there I was sitting, I vow
That the day is scarce older an hour.
But now?

Where am I? who ought to know
Every inch of this leafy land.
Yet here, but a step at the most, or two,
From the door of the well-known mill
(Which all the while must be near at hand,
For the sound of it follows me still)
I am lost in a forest whose glades expand
O'er me, before me, immense and dense;
Where shadow and sighing sound profound
Pour into my spirit a sense intense
Of dimness and distance; and, turning around
And around myself, I no further have got
Than the wheel of that mill, which, the more
to confound
My confusion, I hear, tho' I see it not.

III.

I did well to be on my guard!
Tho' my caution avail'd not much.
One step more over the sward
Which had seem'd so safe and hard,
And the grass, or whatever I took for such,
Giving suddenly way at my foot's first touch,
Down with it, down, I fell
Into the depths of a dell
Sunless and silent and deep
As the dim caverns of sleep.

IV.

There, thro' the gloom in distress
Gazing around, I could see
That some four-footed stray-away less
Keen of eye, or of footstep steady
Than I myself, had been caught already
By the snare which had thus caught me.

In the hug of those horrible rocks,
Unacquainted companions we,
Like two vagabonds set in the stocks.
But what could the creature be?
A fox? Was it, truly, a fox?
Ha! how got the rascal here?
No matter! he gets not out.
'Tis the end of his bad career.

V.

Yet is it a fox? I doubt,
Now the gleam of his eyes grow clear
Thro' the dim light round about.
From the look in those wistful eyes
Who could possibly recognize
The rogue whose rascalities bold,
By farmwife and fabulist told,
Have so ruin'd his reputation?
What a sadness of resignation!

VI.

And he seem'd to me wondrous old.

VII.

I thought, as he eyed me so,
He was asking pity from man:
Tho' needs must the rascal know
Men have put him under their ban.
My soul was grieved, I confess,
At the sight of the brute's distress,
And I mutter'd, "Poor Reynard! I see
Thou art lean and gray as a ghost,
And the few teeth, age at the most
Hath spared thee, are worn to a stump.
If I can, I will set thee free.
For the miller's pullets, tho' plump,
Have nothing to fear from thee.

And 'tis never too late to mend.
Trust me ! I speak as a friend."

VIII.

He seem'd to understand ;
Crept closer, and lick'd my hand.
" There, there ! we are friends. But how
To get out of this horrible hole ?
Ha ! some issue seems yonder : and now
Up I climb by the oak-tree bole.
Leap on my shoulder. Hold fast.
Well clamber'd ! welcome the goal !
Thou art safe on thy road at last.
And I heartily wish I could say
As much for myself : but, aghast,
I perceive I have miss'd my way."

IX.

Yet the creature will not go.
He lingers : and still he eyes me
With those wonderful eyes, as tho'
(Do they bless, beseech, or advise me ?)
There were something, still, he wanted.
" What is it ? Speak, then, speak !
Nothing can now surprise me ;
Except that the spell should break.
For I think I am here in a forest enchanted,
And, if I can grant it, thy prayer is granted."

X.

" Thou hast help'd me. I thank thee, man."
" What magic my fancy mocks ? "
" And will help thee, too, if I can."
" What art thou ? " Sadly the fox
Said, " I am the ancient Fox of Fable.
Few are the men I have met with, able

To understand me ; and still more few
The men that listen to those who do."

XI.

"What!" I exclaim'd, "thou hast known,
then, thou,
That spiteful hunchback, old Æsop?" — "I
know
That Æsop," he answer'd in scorn,
"Hath no hump on his honest back ;
And, never having been born,
He never hath died." "Alack !
Thou art, indeed, I perceive,
The Fox of Fable! Pray,
What next wilt thou have me believe?"

XII.

"That Æsop is living to-day."
"Where, prithee?"

XIII.

"In me: in thee:
For he lives in each living creature
(Man, beast, bird, blossom, and tree),
And his life is the love of nature.
The complaint, that was half a caress,
Men have turn'd into bitterness:
The counsel, cordial and bland,
To a churlish reprimand:
Justice, robed in her ruth,
To Resentment eager to smite:
And Sagacity, Humor, and Truth,
Into Sarcasm, Satire, and Spite.
Thus, alas! when, to banish the true,
A false Æsop you form'd, of your own,
We, the children of Æsop, withdrew.
For we found that to leave you alone

Was then all you had left to us. Few
Are the men with whom now we are able
To converse, as our wont was of old :
And, afar in the Forest of Fable,
With, between us, a world sad and cold,
Safe we dwell, out of your view.
But, O man, thou hast open'd thy heart
Unto mine, and thus broken the spell :
So my thanks prithee take, ere we part,
In the language of Fable. Farewell !”

XIV.

“Stay !” I cried, “one last word, I implore !
Must that word be farewell, fellow-creature ?
May we meet, then, no more, no more,
In the motherly arms of Nature ?
Ah, those friendly voices of yore !
Could I hear them, I fain would record
All they said to me ; writing it down
Simply, honestly, true to a word.”

XV.

“My part I have done. Do thine own,”
Said the Fox (as we turn'd, and stood
Where, pleasantly welcoming me,
Peep'd the mill, once more, thro' the wood)
“Love us, and — we shall see.”

XVI.

“Love you ?” I cried ; “but what use in that,
If I never may meet you again ?
Never mingle among you in brotherly chat !
Must I love, and yet seek you in vain ?”
The Fox hesitated, then sigh'd,
“Ah, friend, have you ever yet tried ?
They fail not to find us, who seek,
Though disguised do we go amongst men.

Approach, I say, question, and speak
Heart to heart with all creatures: and then,
. . . Well, hast thou not spoken to me
From thy heart? and mine own, was it dumb?"

XVII.

"Then," I said, "whatsoever they be
That I meet, as the chance may come,
If I speak to, and question them, all —
Bees that hover, and blossoms that hum;
The beast of the field or the stall;
The trees, leaves, rushes, and grasses;
The rivulet, running away;
The bird of the air, as it passes;
Or the mountains, that motionless stay;
And yet whose irremovable masses
Keep changing, as dreams do, all day;
Will they answer me? Tell me, O tell!
For, look you, I love them well."

XVIII.

The Fox, as he turn'd aside,
Gave me a friendly glance;
And, fading into the forest, replied
With encouraging voice, "Perchance.
Try!" And so . . . Well, I have tried.





FABLES IN SONG.



I.

THE THISTLE.

MOTTO.

(A Flower's Ballad.)

It was a thorn,
And it stood forlorn
In the burning sunrise land:

A blighted thorn,
And at eve and morn
Thus it sigh'd to the desert sand—

“Every flower,
By its beauty's power,
With a crown of glory is crown'd.

“No crown have I,
For a crown I sigh,
For a crown that I have not found.

“A crown! a crown!
A crown of mine own,
To wind in a maiden's hair!”

Sad thorn, why grieve?
Thou a crown shalt weave,
But not for a maiden to wear.

That crown shall shine
When all crowns save thine,
With the glory they gave, are gone:

For, thorn, my thorn,
Thy crown shall be worn
By the King of Sorrows alone.

PRELUDE.

The green grass-blades aquiver
With joy at the dawn of day
(For the most inquisitive ever
Of the flowers of the field are they)
Lisp'd it low to their lazy
Neighbors that flat on the ground,
Dandelion and daisy,
Lay still in a slumber sound:
But soon, as a ripple of shadow
Runs over the whisperous wheat,
The rumor ran over the meadow
With its numberless fluttering feet:
It was told by the water-cresses
To the brooklet that, in and out
Of his garrulous green recesses,
For gossip was gadding about:
And the brooklet, full of the matter,
Spread it abroad with pride;
But he stopp'd to gossip and chatter,
And turn'd so often aside,
That his news got there before him
Ere his journey down was done;
And young leaves in the vale laugh'd o'er him
"We know it! THE SNOW IS GONE!"

The snow is gone! but ye only
Know how good doth that good news sound,
Whose hearts, long buried and lonely,
Have been waiting, winter-bound,
For the voice of the wakening angel
To utter the welcome evangel,
"The snow is gone: re-arise,
And blossom as heretofore,
Hopes, imaginings, memories,
And joys of the days of yore!"

What are the tree-tops saying, swaying
This way all together?
"The winter is past! the south wind at last
Is come, and the sunny weather!"
The trees! there is no mistaking them,
For the trees, they never mistake:
And you may tell, by the way of the stem,
What the way is, the wind doth take.
So, if the tree-tops nod this way,
It is the south wind that is come;
And, if to the other side nod they,
Go, clothe ye warm, or bide at home!
The flowers all know what the tree-tops say;
They are no more deaf than the trees are
dumb.
And they do not wait to hear it twice said
If the news be good; but, discreet and gay,
The awaked buds dance from their downy
bed,
With pursed-up mouth, and with peeping head,
By many a dim green winding way.

'Tis the white anemone, fashion'd so
Like to the stars of the winter snow,
First thinks, "If I come too soon, no doubt
I shall seem but the snow that hath staid too long,
So 'tis I that will be Spring's unguess'd scout."
And wide she wanders the woods among.

Then, from out of the mossiest hiding-places,
Smile meek moonlight-color'd faces
Of pale primroses puritan,
In maiden sisterhoods demure;
Each virgin floweret faint and wan
With the bliss of her own sweet breath so pure.
And the borage, blue-eyed, with a thrill of
pride,

(For warm is her welcome on every side)
From Elfland coming to claim her place,
Gay garments of verdant velvet takes
All creased from the delicate travelling-case
Which a warm breeze breaks. The daisy
awakes
And opens her wondering eyes, yet red
About the rims with a too long sleep;
Whilst, bold from his ambush, with helm on
head
And lance in rest, doth the bulrush leap.

The violets meet, and disport themselves,
Under the trees, by tens and twelves.
The timorous cowslips, one by one,
Trembling, chilly, a-tiptoe stand
On little hillocks and knolls alone;
Watchful pickets that wave a hand
For signal sure that the snow is gone,
Then around them call their comrades all
In a multitudinous, mirthful band;
Till the field is so fill'd with grass and flowers
That wherever, with flashing footsteps, fall
The sweet, fleet, silvery April showers,
They never can touch the earth, which is
Cover'd all over with crocuses,
And the clustering gleam of the buttercup,
And the blithe grass-blades that stand straight
up
And make themselves small, to leave room
for all

The nameless blossoms that nestle be-
 tween
 Their sheltering stems in the herbage
 green;
 Sharp little soldiers, trusty and true,
 Side by side in good order due;
 Arms straight down, and heads forward set,
 And saucily-pointed bayonet.
 Up the hillocks, and down again,
 The green grass marches into the plain,
 If only a light wind over the land
 Whisper the welcome word of command.

PART I.

'Twas long after the grass and the flowers, one
 day,
 That there came straggling along the way
 A little traveller, somewhat late.
 Tired he was; and down he sat
 In the ditch by the road, where he tried to nestle
 Out of the dust and the noontide heat.
 Poor little vagabond wayside Thistle!
 In the ditch was his only safe retreat.
 Flung out of the field as soon as found there,
 And banished the garden, where should he
 stay?
 Wherever he roam'd, still Fortune frown'd there,
 And, wherever he settled, spurn'd him away.
 From place to place, had he wander'd long
 The weary high road, parched with thirst.
 Now here, in the ditch, for a while among
 The brambles hidden, he crouch'd; and first
 Wistfully eyed, on the other side,
 A fresh green meadow with flowerets pied;
 And then, with a pang, as he peep'd and pried,
 "Oh, to rest there!" he thought, and sigh'd.
 "Oh, to rest there, it is all so fair!

Yonder wanders a brooklet, sure?
No! it is only the mill-sluice small.
But he looks like a brook, so bright and pure,
And his banks are broider'd with violets all.
What a hurry he seems to be in! Ah, why
Doth he hasten so fast? If I were he,
There would I linger, and rest, and try
To be left in peace. Take heed! (ah me,
He doth not hear me — how weary I am!)
Take heed, for the sake of thine old mill-dam,
Thou little impetuous fool! I pass'd
Over the bridge, as I came by the road;
And under the bridge I saw rolling fast
A full-grown river, so deep and broad!
If you go on running like that — nor look
Where you are running — you foolish brook,
I predict you will fall into trouble at last,
And the great big river will eat you up.
That is all you will get by your heedless haste.
Oh, if I were you, it is there I'd stop,
There where you are, with the flowers and
grass.
For I know what it is to wander, alas!
It is only to fall from bad to worse,
And find no rest in the universe.

“Soft! — I have half a mind to try —
Could one slip in yonder quietly,
Where the rippled damp of the deep grass
spares
Cool rest to each roving butterfly,
How pleasant 'twould be! There is nobody by,
And perhaps there is nobody owns or cares
To look after yon meadow. It seems so still,
Silent, and safe — shall I venture? — I will!
From the ditch it is but a step or two.
And, maybe, the owner is dead, and the heirs
Away in the town, and will never know.”

PART II.

Then the little Thistle a-tiptoe stood,
All in a tremble, sharp yet shy.
The vagabond's conscience was not good.
He had been so often a trespasser sly,
He had been so often caught by the law,
He had been so often beaten before :
He was still so small : if a spade he saw,
He mutter'd a *Paternoster* o'er,
And cower'd. So, cautiously thrusting out
Here a timorous leaf, there a tiny sprout,
And then dropping a seed ; and so waiting
anon
For a chance lift got from the wind — still on,
With a hope that the sun and the breeze
might please
To be helpful and kind — by degrees he frees
And feels his way with a fluttering heart.
In the ditch there were heaps of stones to
pass.
They scratch'd him, and tore him, and made
him smart,
And ruin'd his leaves. But those leaves, alas,
Already so tatter'd and shatter'd were,
That to keep them longer was worth no care ;
And at last he was safe in the meadow ; and
there
“ Ah, ha ! ” sigh'd the Thistle ; “ so far, so
well !
If I can but stay where I am, I shall fare
Blithe as the bee in the blossom's bell.
How green it is here, and how fresh, and fair !
And, oh, what a pleasure henceforth to dwell
In this blest abode ! to have done with the road,
And got rid of the ditch ! Ah, who can tell
The rapture of rest to the wanderer's
breast ? ”

Down out of heaven a dewdrop fell
 On the head of the Thistle: and he fell asleep
 In the lap of the twilight soft and deep.

PART III.

At sunrise he woke: and he still was there,
 In the bright grass, breathing the balmy air.
 He stretch'd his limbs, and he shook off the dust,
 And he wash'd himself in the morning dew;
 And, opening his peddler's pack, out-thrust
 A spruce little pair of leaflets new;
 And made for himself a fine white ruff,
 About his neck to wear;
 And prun'd and polish'd his prickles tough;
 And put on a holiday air.
 And "If only nobody finds me out!"
 He laugh'd, as he loll'd among
 The grass, delighted, and look'd about,
 And humm'd a homely song;
 Which he loved because, like himself, 'twas
 known
 As a wanderer here and there,

*"A crown! a crown!
 A crown of mine own,
 To wind in a maiden's hair!"*

But . . . a sweep of the scythe, and a stamp of
 the foot,
 And "Vile weed! is there no getting rid of
 thee ever?"
 And what little was spared by the scythe, the
 boot,
 With its hobnails, hasten'd to crush and
 shiver.

PART IV.

'Twas the Farmer, who just then happen'd to
pass.

He had gone to the field to cut some grass
For his beast that morn; and no sooner saw
The trespasser there *in flagrante delicto*,
Than, scythe in hand, he enforced the law
On the luckless offender, *vi et ictu*.

All mangled and bruised, the poor little Thistle
With his desperate roots to the soil clung fast.
The Farmer away, with a careless whistle,
Homeward over the meadow pass'd.
The Thistle breathed freër, and shook his
gashed head.

"All's well, if it be no worse!" he said.
"My crown is gone, but 'twill grow again.
There is many another (*I feel it*) in me.
And one must not make too much of the pain.
Only, you good saints, let me not be
Forced, for my sins, to return to the road!
Only not that! If I can but contrive
To rest here, somehow or other! I see
One may lose his head in this brave abode.
But I'm on my guard, and I'll struggle and strive,
As long as I live, to keep alive."
Then his roots he burrow'd more deep and broad.

But every day 'twas the selfsame thing!
Tho' he made himself little, and hid his head,
Trying, with all his might, to cling
Close to the soil, and appear to be dead.
For his spacious leaves, that were carved and
curl'd
For Corinthian columns in temples fair,
He could not check them when these unfurl'd
Their flourishing architecture there,

And, all about him their beauty spreading,
 Layer on layer uprose from below ;
 And the hardy young head, in despite of be-
 heading,
 Sprang up again — for the scythe to mow !
 Round and about him, each blossom was blowing.
 No chance of blowing had *he* found ever :
 Who no sooner was seen than the sharp steel
 mowing,
 Or the harsh foot crushing him, stopp'd the
 endeavor.
 And, " Oh, blessèd," he sigh'd, " is the blossom
 that blows !
 Colors I know of, no eyes yet see.
 But I dare not show them ; and nobody knows,
 Nobody guesses, what's hidden in me !
 In all the world but one creature, alas,
 For love's sake seeks me ; and *he* is an ass."

PART V.

So went the Spring : and so came and went
 The Summer. The aftermath was mown :
 And there where, erewhile, in one element
 Of color and odor together blent,
 By the balmy breath of the light wind blown,
 The flowing grass and the bending blooms
 (A rapturous river of gleams and glooms !)
 Had rippled and roll'd, lay clods of mould
 Black and bald ; and between them grew
 Coarse aftergrowths, gray, bristly, and cold ;
 And the beast of the field had the residue.
 The primrose, cowslip, and violet,
 With their glow-worm glitter were gone ; and
 the white
 Anemone's constellations, set,
 Had left the earth dark as a starless night,
 Where the grass fell off from the woodland wet.
 The blue-eyed borage was blinded quite.

But, outliving his betters one by one,
 In the flowerless field, with no thought of
 flight,
 The brave little Thistle remain'd—alone!
 And, since skies were cold, and suns were
 dim,
 No one noticed, and no one praised.
 But also no one *maltreated*, him.
 And the pensive beasts of the field, that grazed
 The twice-cropt grass, where their wandering
 whim
 Led them, lazy, from spot to spot,
 Shunn'd the Thistle and harm'd him not.

PART VI.

Then the Thistle, at last, could enlarge his store
 Of the few joys fate had vouchsafed him sparely.
 Baffled a hundred times, and more,
 Bruised, and torn, and surviving barely,
 Still he *survived*: and for him, him only,
 Green leaves gladden'd the leafless cold
 Where, Summer's orphan, he linger'd lonely
 Over her grave in the frozen mould.
 For, as days, long dead, by a bard born after
 Are invoked, and revive in a form more fair,
 All the bliss that was beauty, the life that was
 laughter,
 Ere the frolic fields were bereft and bare,
 The lone Thistle renew'd and transform'd to
 his own;
 As flower by flower — from the fervid rose,
 Whose beauty so well to herself is known,
 That she blushes proud of the truth she knows,
 To the violet, Modesty's vanquished child,
 Hiding her head in the sylvan places
 Where her wandering wooer, the March gust
 wild,
 Hath left her faint from his harsh embraces,

All of them — all, in a dream divine
To the heart of the Thistle sweet secrets told
Of blushes that burn, and of brows that
shine,
With passion of purple and glory of gold.
So all flowers of the field were alive in one :
And the glow of his sheen, and the gloss
of his down,
Were as jewels dead queens have confided
alone
To the craftsman who fashions them all to a
crown.

For each hope in the heart of the poor plant
hidden
Each vision of bliss and of beauty, nursed,
With a passion by Prejudice check'd and
chidden,
For a life by the fiat of Fortune cursed,
Rushing forthwith into rich reality,
Fill'd the cup of a quenchless thirst
Till it flow'd with exuberant prodigality,
And his long-pent life into blossom burst.
A single blossom : but statelier far,
And fairer, than many a million are.
A splendid disk, full and flashing with wonder !
As the sea-rose swims on the water, so
That effulgent star on the bleak earth under
Lay spread out in a luminous glow.
And "At last I can blossom ! blossom ! blossom !"
The Thistle laugh'd, greeting the earth and
heaven,
And he blossom'd his whole heart out of his
bosom.

And all was forgotten, save all that was given.

II.

POSSESSION.

A Poet loved a Star,
 And to it whisper'd nightly,
 "Being so fair, why art thou, love, so far?
 Or why so coldly shine, who shinest so brightly?
 O Beauty, woo'd and unpossessed,
 O might I to this beating breast
 But clasp thee once, and then die, blest!"

That Star her Poet's love,
 So wildly warm, made human.
 And, leaving for his sake her heaven above,
 His Star stoop'd earthward, and became a Wo-
 man.

"Thou who hast woo'd and hast possessed,
 My lover, answer, which was best,
 The Star's beam, or the Woman's breast?"

"I miss from heaven," the man replied,
 "A light that drew my spirit to it."
 And to the man the woman sigh'd,
 "I miss from earth a poet."



III.

WHO'S IN THE RIGHT?

PRELUDE.

A BATTERY, posted in haste, at last,
 On the brow of a hill in the foeman's flank,
 Had decided the fate of the day. Fast, fast,
 In many a broken and billowy rank

The bewilder'd rear of his battle fled.
But, rapid behind, like a rushing wind
That rattles with hail, to the lowland red
Down from the ridge of the smoky hill,
The cavalry clash'd in a clattering shower;
Crushing the harvest, and chasing still
All that was left of a nation's power.

And wide it swept over the wasted plain,
That rapture of ruin, red in the glare
Of burning barns; and the bolted rain
Sang thro' the blacken'd and sulphurous air,
As in storm it stream'd and subsided again;
Till all was still save the far-off blare
Of a ghostly bugle, echoing chill;
Whose echoes, heard by the yet unslain
O'er leagues of litter, from hill to hill
Proclaim'd that the hurly-burly was done:
A kingdom lost and a kingdom won!

PART I.

I.

In that hollow battery's earthen mound,
Gayly gather'd the guns around,
The officers, free at the fall of the day,
Were discussing with whom the achievement lay
Of so great a success. And said one of them,
"Friends,
Was there ever a captain so skill'd in war.
As our gallant Prince? Bright Victory wends
With him, wherever his flag flies, far
From city to city; and lucky are we
Whose fortunes follow the guiding star
Of a hero, whose genius, all agree,
Is as great as his glorious actions are."

Another, in answer, his shoulders shrugg'd,
And "Ay," as his shaggy beard he tugg'd,
"So is every conqueror styled," quoth he,
"Though owed to others his conquests be.
But the few to whom war's art is known
Know 'tis the General Staff alone
That organizes and orders all;
To each arm of the service assigns that place
Where best the effect of its force may fall,
And the plan of the whole campaign doth trace."
"May be," said a third, "that by these and those,
In a general way, is good service done.
No fruit can ripen, of course one knows,
Without the assistance of soil and sun.
But the question is — when your fruit is ripe,
How to pluck it." (And here, his pipe
He lit, as he added) "That, you see,
Can only be done by the Cavalry."
"You forget," said a fourth, an Engineer,
"The man who posted this battery here.
The foe had outnumber'd us, ten to one,
And would, but for him, have o'erwhelm'd us
too."
"Posted the battery? Easily done!"
A sergeant mutter'd. "Forget not, you,
Which of us was it, that pointed the gun."

II.

'Neath the battery wall where these conversed,
A wounded gunner unheeded lay;
By a random shell, that had near him burst,
His feet were shatter'd and shorn away.
His lips were baked by a burning thirst,
On his limbs did the icy ague prey:
The yet smouldering brand in his frozen hand
He grasp'd; and follow'd, with eyes aflame,
The far-off blaze, that greeted his gaze
With the deadly effect of his life's last aim.

Not a word had he heard
Of the talk around him.
He died. And, with pride
In death dealt, death crown'd him.
Pain's parched furrows placidly glided
Out of his weather-beaten face;
But a silent smile of triumph slid,
Under death's hovering hand, in their place;
And death, for a sign, congeal'd it there,
Stern, and fair.

III.

Now, of all the glory that gilt that day
Not a gleam yet glows in these after ages.
All that glitter'd hath faded away;
All, save the name of the Prince; in her pages
By History written, though seldom read.
All else is dead.

PART II.

I.

Clio, with clarion, palm, and book,
Pass on! Not thine are we.
Thy plainer sister's shepherd crook
We follow; seeking flowers forsook,
That breathe about the rural brook,
And win the wandering bee.

What History oft, in stately pride,
With haughty gesture spurns aside,
Wild Fable from the wayside field
Picks up, and lays to heart.
And truths, by her to us reveal'd,
Do we to you impart:

II.

How that bronze tube, round which erewhile
This discussion was carried so high,
Mock'd, as it listen'd, and said with a smile,
"Men boast, but the victor am I!"
"Thou?" growl'd the Cannon Ball — "thou!
is it thou

Who didst level yon walls with the plain,
Mowing down men, as the harvesters mow
Hollow paths thro' the thick of the grain?
Braggart! 'tis I who alone can do this.
'Tis the brush of my brazen orb bursts wide
War's mason'd masses!" — Whereto, with a
hiss,

"Silence, blockhead!" the Powder replied.
"On the arsenal floor hadst thou rested still,
Were it not for me, who thy wings provide.
And thou art but the deed: it is I am the will."
But, as thus he mutter'd, with surly pride,
"Vagabond!" scornfully splutter'd the Match,
"Boast not thou in thy master's presence!
Ball, Cannon, and Powder, — inert batch
Of base stuff, stirr'd by my quickening essence, —
The Fire am I, and my slaves are ye.
He, whose vitals a vulture tore,
Well was he 'ware of the worth of me,
When from heaven he stole, in the days of yore,
The spark that in my Promethean wand
Yet glows with the heat of a god's invention."

III.

"Attention!"
An officer cried, in command.

IV.

For faint, and afar, with a dying spasm,
The bruised-out battle was breathing again.
And the gun was charged, from his gaping chasm,
To clear it away from the cumber'd plain
Where it crawl'd in pain.

V.

The gunner pointed the gun to the mark.
With an eager spark
The ardent match, death's nimble adept,
To the touch-hole leapt,
And . . . went out in the dark.
Not a groan, not a flame, from the great gun
came,
Not a belch of smoke: unejected slept
In his burthen'd gullet the sullen bullet:
The captains were cursing, the gunners were
grumbling,
And, drop upon droplet, as down it came tum-
bling,
Merrily, mockingly laugh'd the light Shower:
"O fools! lo, I sprinkle a silvery twinkle
Of beads from my bosom, and where is your
power?
Black dust of death, art thou melted quite
Into a harmless unsavory sop?
What of your lightnings? where is their light?
Quenched in a quagmire, slain by a slop!
Your valorous thunders, voices of might?
Struck dumb by a dancing drop!"

VI.

The dying Fire heard this,
And with a hiss

Spat out the scorn of his indignant hate,
 "Demon of Impotence!
 Boast not that thou art great,
 Upon the poor pretence
 Of greatness hinder'd and defeated by thee.
 Force to annihilate
 Force, hast thou: but the gods deny thee
 Force to create."

VII.

"Stay, not so fast!"
 Sighingly answer'd him the streaming Rain.
 "Destroyer, what hast *thou* created? Cast
 On thy brief work (death, devastation, pain)
 One glare — thy last!
 Show me thy greatness. Is it yonder plain
 Where thou hast pass'd,
 Leaving behind thee hideous heaps of slain
 And ruin vast?
 Lo, with my little drops, I bless again
 And beautify the fields which thou didst blast!
 Rend, wither, waste, and ruin, what thou wilt,
 But call not Greatness what the gods call Guilt.
 Blossoms and grass from blood in battle spilt,
 And popped corn, I bring.
 'Mid mouldering Babels, to Oblivion built,
 My violets spring.
 Little by little, my small drops have strength
 To deck with green delights the grateful earth:
 Little by little, to large seas at length
 Small springs give birth:
 By little things the growing world grows great,
 And of great doings rests but little done:
 From little fibres in the loom of Fate
 Time's robe is spun:
 Small are the cymbals that, when clashed, proclaim
 The march of Force: from shafts of tiny stature
 Co-operant atoms build the crystal frame
 Of mighty Nature.

By little ducts Thought's widening river runs
Thro' nerve and brain, yet fills the ages vast,
And even the secret of the central suns
Invades at last:
In little waves light leaps from star to star:
Small pencils paint the welkin's azure pall:
And small life's primal universes are,
Yet they are all."



IV.

PREMATURITY.

I.

If aught in nature be unnatural,
It is the slaying by a springtide frost
Of Spring's own children: cheated blossoms all,
Betray'd i' the birth, and born for burial
Of budding promise, scarce beloved ere lost!
Once, in the silence of a clear Spring night,
This still, cold-footed Frost, with footstep light
Slid thro' the tepid season, like a ghost
 Wrapped in thin white.
Flitting, he smote the first-born of the year,
And, ere the break of day, their pretty buds
 were sear.

II.

But the blossoms that perish'd
 Were those alone
Which, in haste to be cherish'd,
 With loosen'd zone
Had too soon to the sun all their beauty shown.
 Lightly-vested,
 Amorous-breasted,

Blossom of almond, blossom of peach :
 Impatient children, with hearts unsteady,
 So young, and yet more precocious each
 Than the leaves of the Summer, and blushing
 already !

III.

These perish'd because too soon they lived ;
 But the oak flower, prudent and proud, survived.
 "If the sun would win me," she thought, "he
 must
 Wait for me, wooing me warmly the while ;
 For a flower's a fool, if a flower would trust
 Her whole sweet being to one first smile."



V.

ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.

I.

I' THE city of the ruins of the world
 A rumor flutter'd, on that breeze unfurl'd
 Whose puff-cheek'd Æolus is Public Prate,
 That some vine's owner, digging the estate
 Of classic dirt which lodged his lucky vine,
 Had stumbled on a statue, Greek, and fine.

II.

Priests, princes, populace — Rome's papal fold
 Prolific — rams and lambs — the young, the old,
 The learnèd and unlearnèd — all came flocking
 (Some clad in scarlet hat and purple stocking ;

Some, with no stockings, and no hats at all;
 But each as blithe as for a festival)
 To gaze, and praise, and bless the favor'd spot,
 Whence Rome, renascent, such a prize had got
 Back from the ruins of herself. For there,
 In radiant resurrection, fresh and fair
 As when that statue first with classic grace
 The clement Cæsar's palace deck'd, i' the place
 Where sank the baths of Titus from the sun,
 Apollo's patriot priest, Laocoön,
 Reveal'd to Roman crowds, now Christian grown,
 That Pagan Anguish which, in Parian stone,
 The Rhodian artist had express'd so well
 That here forever Pain hath Beauty's spell.

III.

Down in the wreck and rummage of the ground
 Wherein this famous statue had been found,
 A snake, emergent from his clayey chasm,
 Had watch'd with wonder Rome's enthusiasm.
 And, when the crowd was gone, the reptile gazed
 Upon the statue which the crowd had praised.
 Laocoön, and his sons, this snake esteem'd
 But secondary parts of what he deem'd
 The sculptor's main design. As what one sees
 (When painted, haply, by the Veronese)
 Most to admire in Cana's banquet board,
 For nuptial feast with goodly goblets stored
 And viands spread — is not the wine and meat,
 But the brave guests who drink it and who eat;
 So, what this reptile deem'd the chiefest part
 Of the whole group, and of its artist's art
 The choicest specimen, was — naturally —
 Not the mere victims of the slaughterous sally
 Made by its kind on the Laocoöns,
 (Not even the father, and much less the sons)
 Who for those snakes were as a banquet spread,
 But the snakes' selves, who on that banquet fed.

IV.

And "Is that all?" the ambitious reptile cried,
 "As much, and more can I!" Then, puffed
 with pride,
 About the statue of a wrestler old,
 That stood thereby, his fluctuous rings he roll'd,
 Regurgitating gulfy waves, that wound
 In sliding sinuous ripple round and round;
 Knotted the athlete's knees in cumbrous coil,
 Clove to his stretcht throat, and with slimy toil
 Strove to crush flat the swoln and starting throng
 Of bulky sinews that, like bulwarks strong,
 Buttress'd the large limbs of the marble man.
 Thrice round the raised right arm the reptile ran
 His rolling orbs; and, winding in and out,
 With clasp convulsive girt the breast about.

V.

In vain! For not one massive muscle shrank,
 Bruised by the writhing worm's embrace; nor
 sank
 The raised right arm; nor groan'd the granite
 breast.
 And the mute mouth its marble smile compress'd,
 Calm as before, 'twixt serious lips serene.
 Nought marr'd that noble form's majestic mien,
 And gesture stern. The sole disfigurement
 Was its aggressor's; as, with strength nigh
 spent,
 The serpent strain'd. The sole contortion shown
 Was all its reptile rival's; not its own.

VI.

When the great gods, grown jealous of great men,
 Great vengeance take on human greatness; when

One grandeur to another, grander still,
 Succumbs; when the Divinity, whose will
 Goads man with agony, doth not disdain
 To beautify the expression of man's pain;
 When he, who doth with equal power inspire
 The harmonious strings of the delightful lyre
 And the fell serpent fangs of Tenedos,
 Is King Apollo; then, with loss on loss,
 Albeit the waves of blind Oblivion
 Wash out wide empires as they wander on,
 Tho' slowly over temple, tower, and town,
 Grow green the grass of Lethe's drowsy down,
 And the dull weed of dark Forgetfulness
 Round spotless statues its accurst caress
 Do creeping wind, — yet this the gods vouch-
 safe:

If from the deep men save one wandering waif
 Of wrecks that once immortal shapes have borne,
 Still of some grace divine not all forlorn
 Men's lives are left. One fragment, if no more,
 Of those great forms great thoughts have fill'd
 of yore,
 Suffices Beauty to reveal her will,
 Marr'd, murder'd, buried, but triumphant still!

VII.

Well-meaning, but unwise, contortionists
 Of our well-meaning times, whose tragic twists
 Try modern nerves, appease your emulous rage
 On the limp substance of the living age,
 But touch not ye the antique marble. Chill
 To your embrace, and unresponsive still,
 Its firm long-frozen grain will foil forever
 The feeble fierceness of your fangs' endeavor.
 For, O ambitious snakes! tho' snakes you be,
 You are not snakes of Tenedos; nor we
 Laocoöns; nor the wrath you represent
 The wrath of an Apollo. Be content

To writhe in elegiac ecstasies
 Round subjects fitted to your strength and size.
 Feed on fresh food. But seek no second feasts
 From the old Sun-God's long-since-perished
 priests.



VI.

A PROVISION FOR LIFE.

A PINE-TREE bless'd its favor'd fate, because
 Room to grow barely 'twixt the grudging jaws
 Of one of the chapped sandstone's gravell'd flaws

It found: where early chance had cast its lot
 On a bare rock, with leave to thrive, or not,
 As later chance might choose, in that chill spot.

"Ah, what good fortune!" sigh'd the grateful
 tree,

"That in this fissure the wind planted me!
 But for its inch of earth, what should I be?"

Fool! Thy good fortune was not the bestowing
 Of that scant handful of earth's overflowing.
 It was — and is — thy faculty of growing.



To E. L.,

WITH FABLES VII. AND VIII.

FAIR soul, that o'er mine own dost shine
 So fair, so far above,
 Dear heart, that hast so close to mine
 The home of thy true love:

Be thine these songs of Far and Near !
Two worlds their sources are :
Each makes the other doubly dear,
The near one and the far



VII.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ; OR, THE FAR.

PART I.

I.

WHEN little kings, whose race was run
A little while ago,
Had little thrones to sit upon,
And little else to do,
Within a little town, remote
From Europe's larger scenes,
There dwelt a man of little note,
Who lived on little means.

II.

A man, he was, of humble birth and mind,
His life was lowly, small was his estate.
Yet was there ever a human life confined
In bounds so narrow by ungenerous fate,
But it had in it something far and strange ?
This man, from youth to age, had lived and
grown
In a great longing for a far blue range
Of hills that hover'd o'er his native town.
Ne'er had his footsteps climb'd those mountains
blue,
But half his life, and all his thoughts, dwelt
there.
He was a man beyond himself. They drew
His being out of him, and made it fair.

For wheresoe'er his gaze around him roved,
There were those beautiful blue hills. And
he,

Who lived, not in himself, but them, so loved
And so revered them, that they ceased to be
To him mere hills, mere human feet may
wend.

Their azure summits, to his longing view,
Were features of a dear, though distant friend,
In kingly coronal and mantle blue.

III.

And "Oh," he mused, "full sure am I
Those mountains feel, in silent joy,
The love my gaze doth give them. They
Seek it, indeed, with signs all day;
Down drawing o'er their shoulders fair,
This way and that, soft veils of air,
And colors, never twice the same,
Woven of wind, and dew, and flame,
And strange cloud-shadows, and slant showers.

"That is their speech. 'Tis unlike ours,
Easy to learn, tho', if one tries;
One only has to use his eyes.
The colors are the vowels. These
Are liquid links whose mobile ease
Such fluent combination grants
To those substantial consonants,
Precipitous crags, and sudden peaks.
The accents are the lightning-streaks
And thunder-claps, that render, each,
Such emphasis to mountain speech.
Next follow fog and mist, which are
Verbs we may call irregular;
Perplexing when at first you view them,
But persevere, and you'll get thro' them.

Then comes the rain, which just supplies
The necessary quantities
Of notes of admiration. Far
Too many, folks may think they are.
But if such folks could understand
The mountains, there on every hand
They'd find about them more, far more,
Than notes of admiration, score
On score, suffice for. Think, what lands
And peoples every peak commands!
Then find the statesman that knows how
To govern one land. As for two,
That task's beyond the best, we feel.
Now, had we, like the hills, to deal
With winds, and storms, and clouds, and snows,
Nor lose our dignified repose,
Who'd wonder why the hills abound
In thoughts so serious, so profound,
About what men, when met together,
Talk, without thinking, of — the weather?
But still to talk it is men's wont,
Both when they think and when they don't.
Ah, good old hills! If Majesty
Should, some day hence, be forced to fly
From all her other thrones on earth,
'Tis there, with you, who gave her birth,
That she her latest home would find,
Above, but still among, mankind!"

PART II.

I.

Thus ever the fancies of the man
(Like their own restless rills)
Upon the mighty mountains ran,
Refreshed by far-off hills.
Not one of his neighbors, he could swear,
Half so well as those mountains, knew him,

Who wrapp'd his soul in their robe of blue.
And, if that were fancy, *this* was true:
That, whether or not, those mountains fair
For the good of this man had a thought or care,
Much good they had contrived to do him
By simply being there.

II.

His only wish was to tell them of it,
And requite them for it. But not, as now,
When to every peak, with the snow above it,
And the azure of heaven above the snow,
It was only his wishes that found their way;
But among the hills, *himself*, some day
Before he died, if that might be,
When the hills could hear what he had to say,
And how much to say to the hills had he!

III.

O heavenly power of human wishes!
For as wings to birds, and as fins to fishes,
Are a man's desires to the soul of a man.
'Tis by these, and by these alone, it can
Wander at will thro' its native sphere
Where the beauty that's far is the bliss that is
near.

Fate favor'd the wishes of this poor man.
For the wave of the ebbing century ran
In a sudden surge of storm at last
Over the little spot of earth,
Where, else, unnoticed he might have passed
To his obscure death from his obscure birth.
And thus he, whose life had lain out of sight,
A social nothing, the strain and swell
Of the time's strong trouble swept into light,
And suddenly made perceptible.
Then, as soon as noticed by those in power,
The man was honor'd (O happy hour!)

By the sight of his name in a Royal Decree;
Which inform'd the world that he (poor *he!*
Who could have fancied so strange a thing?)
Had really and truly lived to be
A cause of alarm to his lord the King.
For it banish'd him to a place, he knew
Must be in the midst of those mountains blue.
And thus his wishes, at last, came true.

PART III.

I.

Glad was our friend, when himself he found,
In travelling trim, to the mountains bound!
The way was long, and the road was steep,
And, before he had got to his journey's end,
The night was dark, and the hills asleep.
"Aha!" thought he, "will they know their
friend,
Who is here at last? Too late to-night
To see them, of course! They are sleeping now.
But to-morrow, to-morrow at earliest light,
I shall arise ere the red cock crow,
And visit mine old friends, every one."

II.

So, at dawn, he arose with the rising sun,
And forth, as blithe as a bird, went he.
At first he was puzzled and pain'd, to find
All round him a field which appear'd to be
Just like the fields he had left behind:
A little meadow of grass, hemm'd round
With many a little hillock and mound,
Which hinder'd his sight from ranging far.
"But soon are these small hills climb'd," he
thought,
"And behind them, doubtless, the blue ones are,
Where, sportively hiding, they wish to be
caught."

III.

Then he mounted the hillocks that rose close by,
 And thence, indeed, he beheld once more
 The old blue hills. But they were not nigh;
 They were far, far, far away, as before.

IV.

"Strange!" he mused, "yet I travell'd all day,
 Ay, and more than the half o' the night, too, post!
 And all my life I have heard folks say
 That the blue hills are but a day, at most,
 From my native town. Did they err, I wonder?"
 Then, he ask'd of a traveller passing by,
 "Pray, sir, what is that country yonder?
 There, where the hills are so blue and high."
 And, when the traveller had told him the name
 Of the place where the blue hills now were seen,
 Alas, poor man! 'twas the very same
 Where, till then, he had all his life long been:
 The country about his native town —
 His birthplace — whence he had just been
 banish'd.
 The blue hills *there* he had never known,
 And the blue hills *here*, which he loved, had
 vanish'd.

PART IV.

I.

"And I have been living, then, all this while
 In a blue land — really and truly blue?"
 The exile sigh'd with a sorrowful smile,
 "And never dream'd of it? Can it be true?
 Never dream'd of it! All seem'd gray,
 Or dusty white, with a patch or two
 Of lean green grass, or raw red clay,
 To enliven the rest. But blue? . . . blue?
 . . . blue?"

II.

- And the man fell into a revery.
O'er his cerulean home a brood
Of ethereal clouds was floating free.
And they sign'd to him, and he understood.

III.

“As the waves that are clad in the azure of ocean,
So clad in the azure of heaven are we.
As thou movest, we move, with an unseen motion;
And, where thou followest, there we flee.
For the children of Never and Ever we are,
And our home is Beyond, and our name is Afar.

“Never to us shall thy steps attain,
Nor ever to thee may we draw nearer.
But, if fair in thy vision our forms remain,
Still love us, the farther we are, the dearer,
And be thou ours, as thine we are,
For what were the near, were it not for the far?

“Look above, and below — to the heaven, the plain!
The low and the level, they disappear.
The aloof and the lofty alone remain.
And, forever present tho' never near,
Whilst ours are the summit, the sky, and the star,
Still thine is the beauty of all that we are.”

IV.

All this, in his much-loved mountain-tongue,
The man's heart, hearing it, understood.
And he thought of the old old days, so young!
But he spake not: only, let fall a flood
Of passionate notes of admiration,
Over his wan cheek silently sweeping.
As when, in their sorrow and desolation,
At the death of the summer, the hills are weeping.

V.

Then the folk about him, who knew not aught
Of that mountain language, shook the head.
"How he taketh his sentence to heart!" each
thought.
And "Courage! the times must mend," they said.

VIII.

A WHEAT-STALK; OR, THE NEAR.

I.

THE cattle tinkle down the lanes,
And there the bramble roses blow.
From rocky haunts to reach the plains
The rills, with shaken timbrel, go,
Gay dancers light!
The hills are bright
With gleaming peaks of golden snow.

By fragrant gales in frolic play
The floating corn's green waves are fann'd,
And all above, broad summer day!
And all below, bright summer land!
And, born of each,
Far out of reach,
Those shining alpine spectres stand.

II.

A world of beauty, grandeur, grace,
Abundance, fill'd with force divine,
No sooner doth mine eye embrace
Than my soul hath made it mine.

How deep, O soul,
Thy depth must be,
To hold the whole
Of a world in thee!

III.

But O eye, and O soul, is your thirst yet sated?
Or what more do ye claim for your own?
Must this world, at the best, be so lightly rated,
For the sake of a better, unknown?

Ah, farther away than the farthest hill-top
Do I *feel* mine own boundless emotion!
And my heart, tho' o'erbrimm'd it may be by a
drop,
Is contented not with an ocean.

IV.

On the blossomy lattice ledge,
Whence, far away, I descry
The long land's light blue edge,
With beyond it only the sky,
From a glass half fill'd with water
Leans an ear of wheat. 'Tis a prize
Which erewhile my little daughter
Brought hither with brighten'd eyes.
Its stem, when she pluck'd it, stood
An inch higher than she could see.
And the wheat-field to her was a wood,
And this wheaten stalk was a tree.
And, as soon as her gift my fairy
Had deign'd to confer upon me,
With a frolicsome footstep airy,
Off, carolling, gamboll'd she.

V.

A little child, scarce five years old,
And blithe as bird on bough;
A little maiden, bright as gold,
And pure as new-fall'n snow.

Things seen, to her, are things unknown:
Things near are far away:
The neighboring hamlet, next our own,
As distant as Cathay!

Far things, which we nor feel, nor see,
To her seem close and clear.
In yon blue sky God's guardian eye
She feels, and feels it near.

What need hath she, our world should be
So wondrous wide and far?
Such worlds unknown are all her own,
And every world a star!

VI.

Why, dreaming ever, clings my gaze so fast
To this small wheat-stem? Whence its power
to draw

My reffluent thoughts from yonder distance vast,
And hang them on a homely wheaten straw?

It is that, small and homely though it be,
This ear of wheat so homely and so small,
Because it is so near, so near to me,
Hath size enough and power to cover all.
It leans along full twenty leagues of land,
And hides them with a straw. The purple
hills

Peer through its hoary panicle. The grand
Horizon's azure orb one wheat-stem fills.

Kindly perspective! Little things close by
Exceed great things remote: for Nature's art
Brings vision to a centre in the eye,
Affection to a centre in the heart.
And, were it not so, light and love would be
Lost wanderers; and the universal frame
A heap of fragments; and the force to see,
The force to feel, mere force without an aim.

VII.

O near ones, dear ones! you, in whose right
hands
Our own rests calm; whose faithful hearts all
day
Wide open wait till back from distant lands
Thought, the tired traveller, wends his home-
ward way!

Helpmates and heartmates, gladdeners of gone
years,
Tender companions of our serious days,
Who color with your kisses, smiles, and tears
Life's warm web woven over wonted ways,

Young children, and old neighbors, and old
friends,
Old servants—you, whose smiling circle small
Grows slowly smaller till at last it ends
Where in one grave is room enough for all,

O shut the world out from the heart you cheer!
Tho' small the circle of your smiles may be,
The world is distant, and your smiles are near.
This makes you more than all the world to me.

IX.

THE ASS AND THE WAGTAIL.

I.

THE ass began to bray.
 All who heard him, by the voice of him af-
 frightened,
 Cried "How horrible!" and turn'd their heads
 away.

II.

The sun began to shine.
 All who felt him, by the beam of him delighted,
 Looking up to him, cried fervently, "How fine!"

III.

An ass his feelings has.
 And the feelings of this ass, alas!
 Were wounded.
 He said, tossing his head,
 (And the scorn his speech betray'd, loud bray'd,
 Resounded)
 "Hee! haw!
 Lighter than straw
 On the wind, fools run
 After what glitters. The taste of the day!
 Sound worth they shun,
 Their praises give to the sun's display,
 And to me give none.
 Ungrateful and frivolous fools, I say!
 For, if I were the sun, they would flatter me,
 they
 Who all fly me now. Yet, if I were the sun,
 What could I do for them more, I pray,
 Than, being an ass, I already have done?"

I should simply have nothing to do but to
shine —

Shine, or be seen, 'twould be all as one :

And no great merit in that, I opine,

If one happens to be the sun."

IV.

A wagtail nodded his head.

The ass was pleased. "It is plain

Thou hast understood me," he said.

The wagtail nodded again.

V.

"And my voice hath a charm for *thee*?"

More movements of affirmation.

"Sage bird! I see we agree."

(Much encouraged, continued he)

"What senseless exaggeration

In this praise of the sun! Nay, nay,

I am not unjust, I trust.

I admire, and enjoy, in its way,

(Tho' the end of it all is dust)

The sun's superficial display,

— When there's shadow elsewhere in store.

For what is light without shadow?

And the sun hath no shadow at all.

When he sprawls all ablaze on the meadow,

One is driven for shade to the wall.

Now, that is the fault I deplore.

True art enjoins exclusion;

What artists call 'the file.'

Superabundant diffusion

Is the vice of a vulgar style.

The rich are prodigal rarely.

There's some fire in the sun, no doubt.

But of art . . . well, seeking it fairly,

Not a symptom can I find out.

If the least little leaflet green
Chance to cover the finest peach,
He passes it by unseen,
As tho' it were miles out of reach.
Many a statue fair
Of marble god and goddess,
Perfectly Greek, and bare
Of even a bit of a bodice,
He leaves in the damp and cold
Of their grottoes, and groves, and springs,
To gild, in the dust, with his gold,
The commonest insect things.
Is that worthy work (now own!)
For a star to whom it is given
To saunter all day up and down,
Staring about him, in heaven?
Look at me, little bird! I am far
From comparing my humble powers
With those of that profligate star.
But, to perfect them, all the twelve hours
I've a practical occupation.
Without it, I care not a whit
For brilliant imagination.
And I value not genius or wit,
If it lacks the elaboration,
The earnest moral tone,
And genuine consecration
Of work — work, steadily done.
'Tis with pride that I bear up and down
Sacks of corn to the mill,
And sacks of flour to the town.
For, whilst useful to others, I still
Feel that fairly and fully mine own
Is the honor on me conferr'd
Of the right to be thus employ'd.
'Tis a privilege, little bird,
By the idle never enjoy'd."

VI.

At every boastful word
The ass thus solemnly said,
As tho' in its truth he concurr'd,
The wagtail nodded his head.

VII.

And the ass resumed. "No doubt,
The fat paddock is not for me.
The spruce garden where cabbages sprout,
'Tis but over the wall I see.
From the corn-bin I get not a bite:
To the pampering oat I'm a stranger,
And the fragrant hay is quite
Out of reach of my modest manger.
But of no such dainties I dream.
The thistle, that hardy relation
Of the sickly artichoke,
I have learn'd to know and esteem,
And I relish my well-earn'd ration,
Not envying sumptuous folk.
Then, is it not hard, I ask,
When my voice I raise
In vigorous lays of praise,
To celebrate Virtue's task,
And her days
Well spent, — yon fools, who bask
In the sun's mere casual rays,
All stop their ears with a cry, and fly
My discourse at the very first minute,
Nay, almost before I begin it,
As if the devil were in it?
Why do they do that, why?"

VIII.

Had this worthy ass been content
With the wagtail's tacit assent,

We should never have known, alas!
What a wagtail thinks of an ass.

IX.

But he,
Impatient, as well he might be,
After so long saying his say,
Of getting to all that he said
The selfsame nod of the head
In forever the selfsame way,
Began to demand of his auditor
An opinion more in detail
Concerning the cause he was pleading for.
Then, the wagtail hopp'd from his rail,
And hopp'd on to a stone, that stood
Half out of the brooklet's bed,
And replied, "Not a word have I understood
Of all that you just now said."

X.

"Not a word?" exclaim'd the ass, much sur-
prised,
"Not a word of all I said and all I meant?
And yet, surely, if an ass may trust his eyes,
To each word of it you nodded me assent."

XI.

"Nodded," said the wagtail, "ay!
But nodded you assent, friend, nay!
If I nodded 'twas because it is my way,
And because I am a wagtail, I.
So the sun shines, yonder, up on high,
Just because he is the sun.
And so you, too, as you say,
Fetch and carry sacks all day,
Getting thanks for it from none,
Just because you are an ass."

XII.

Then the wagtail flew away,
Thro' the trees, across the grass.
And this fable is done.



X.

THE MISANTHROPE AND THE BIRD.

ONE more Alceste, by all the world betray'd,
And overburden'd with unnumber'd wrongs,
The victor vices in their hell-pit leaving,
Sought out on earth some solitary spot
For honorable freedom. Scorn of men
Forth drove him, and desire of desertness,
And deep disgust of affectations fed
On fool'd affections, with a sudden force
Hither and thither, till he found at last
A tract of savage, strange, uncitied land,
Forgotten like himself. There settled he;
Far from each false Philinthe and Celimène,
And "love unrul'd by reason," and the troop
Of those "great makers of great protestations"
The world calls friends.

This hater of mankind

Walking alone along the windy wold
One morning, spied a falcon in the wind,
That chased a skylark. And the skylark fled
For shelter to the bosom of the man.
Who, muttering "Miserable little bird,
I give thee what to me none ever gave,"
His cloak unclasp'd, and to the bird vouchsafed
Welcome in woe and shelter from distress.

Then built a bowery cage; where for a while,
With all, save freedom, that a bird can want,
The skylark, seeming well contented, lived.

Was it the memory of a peril past,
That made the sense of present safety sweet?
Or gratitude for benefits received?
Or but the waning charm of change? Alceste,
Tho' disbelieving human kindness still,
And earthly blessedness still disbelieving,
Believed, at least, that he had blessed this bird
With so much bliss as he by that belief
Still made his own, because he was a man.

So lapsed the season. Longer wax'd the days
And the nights warmer: till a tremor ran,
Preluding the revival of the year,
Along the leafless boughs. And, ere it pass'd,
Lo you! like love, that changes life, all round,
Above, beneath, the Spring was everywhere;
Troubling the sleep of Nature with mad hopes.
All things of joy and beauty, long repressed,
Broke out in revel, riotously sure
Of May's delirious promise. From whose mirth,
Pelted with buds, the frowning Winter wrapp'd
His white robe round him, like a minister
Disgraced, that from the uprisen people runs,
And fled, barefooted; muttering "Motley fools,
That fling a saucy triumph in the face
Of fleeting Power, sing! dance! pavilion all
The tipsy tops of yonder swaggering trees
With tassell'd fringe! on every wanton puff
Of passing wind swing out your banners blithe!
Carpet with squander'd broidery, green and gold,
The dull land decked for your audacious march!
Break ope earth's hidden treasures! twirl and
toss

Your silly tinkling timbrels that proclaim
A world's subversion! Fools, *I shall return.*"

Then, for the skies the skylark yearn'd: and,
mad

With memories which the magic of the Spring
Had changed to hopes, he could no comfort find
In any corner of his corbell'd cage.

But, food by day and sleep by night refusing,
He sent forth little plaintive cries, and beat
With petulant beak and breast the osier bars
Of his unvalued lattice. This, Alceste

Beheld, compassionately vexed; and sigh'd
"Thou longest for lost liberty, alas!

The snares of earth, the storms of heaven for-
getting,

The chill wind chattering on the rainy wold,
And the hawk hovering in blue ambush high.

A wandering odor on the wakeful night,
A warmer breeze thro' budded thickets breaking,
Suffice thee to efface all sufferings past,

Insensate! and thou flutterest to regain
Thy persecuting freedom. Out on time!

Doth Memory carve the records of Mischance
With such a careless or a clumsy hand

That, ere the lazy creeping ivy-twine

Hath time to lace her latest epitaph,

It fades away? Ah, were her warning words

But graved on granite, the insensible stone

Would keep unblunted all their biting truths:

But she confides them to the tender stuff

That hearts are made of; and the hot blood
there,

Born for betrayal, heals old hurts in haste,

Lest the scarr'd nerve, grown callous, miss the
smart

Of sufferings yet in store. Go, silly bird!

Thou know'st not how that folk, self-styled elect,

Which deem'd itself Heaven's favorite upon
earth,

Tho' in the desert half a hundred years

It linger'd looking for the Promised Land,

Is at this hour a wanderer as of old,
 The byword of the nations! Get thee gone,
 Truster in promises!" He oped the cage,
 And forth, in vain admonished, flew the bird.

Some few days after, near the selfsame spot
 Where, in the autumn of the bygone year
 Alceste had saved it from its falcon foe,
 He found the skylark dead. Desuetude
 Of self-exertion, caused by comfort got
 Without an effort, had relax'd the strength,
 And dull'd the craft, which Freedom needs to
 bear

The bruising buffets of Necessity.
 Unshelter'd cold and foodless hunger found
 No friend in liberty. A little heap
 Of frozen feathers in the mountain grass
 Was all that rested of a vain desire
 Wrecked on a sea of promise.

Seeing this,
 "Heart-breaking Liberty!" Alceste exclaim'd,
 "If we be strong, with stronger than ourselves
 Thou dost confront us: and, if weak we be,
 In vain thy gifts thou givest us. Yet ah,
 Safe-shelter'd from thy harsh embrace, we droop,
 And find no joy wherever thou art not."



XI.

FORTUNE AND HER FOLLOWERS.

PART I.

Two friends in search of Fortune once set out
 Together. And, for many and many a day,
 Up hill, down dale, and all the land about,
 Ever in search of Fortune wander'd they,

Till both were tired. Then one sat down, and
sigh'd,

"Of finding Fortune I begin to doubt,
And fear we may have taken the wrong way.
How say you, friend?" The other one replied,
"It seems, indeed, that we have gone astray,
For here of Fortune is no trace, in truth.
But there stands one, may haply tell us yet
Which side to turn. Look yonder!" 'Twas a

youth
Who in the crossway stood where two roads met,
And by the bridle held in either hand
A horse. Himself was looking eagerly
To right and left, both ways across the land,
And seem'd to wait for some one. "Halloo, boy!
Hast seen Dame Fortune pass this way?"

"'Twas she
That bade me here remain (for my employ
Is to obey her) until I should see
Two travellers coming, who would ask for her.
And, by the question ye have asked of me,
My charge, I doubt not, doth to you refer.
To whom, as soon as seen, her orders were
That I should give these steeds, which saddled
be

For you to mount. One steed to each."—

"O rare
Good Fortune!" cried the grateful twain. "Say
how

May we our benefactress find? and where?"

"Nay," said the lad, "that's more, sirs, than I
know.

She bade me say her way lies here and there,
And it is yours to find her." Now, the two
(Because they could not both together fare
By different ways, and had no indication
On which side Fortune waited) thereupon
Reluctantly resolved on separation,
Each following Fortune his own way, alone.

For at the point where they took horse, the road
Split into two, which from the selfsame spot
Led right and left; and not a sign-post show'd
Which was the road to Fortune, which was not.

PART II.

The first of the twain then gallop'd amain
Till he came to the nearest town.
And there he was fain to throw up the rein
At the first inn door, and get down.
For his horse was tired; as he was, too;
And of rest and food they were both in need,
Ere they could their journey again pursue.
So there they waited to rest and feed.
But, when horse and man had their strength
renew'd,
They started again, and again pursued
The chase; tho' in vain; for thus ever again,
As from city to city they journey'd fast,
With each fresh fatigue there was need, for the
twain,
Of a fresh repose and a fresh repast;
Till the horse fell lame of a double sprain,
And the man had no money left at last.
To prison he must have gone, no doubt,
If his host (surmising he might do worse,
When the man had his reckoning all run out)
Had not taken in payment the founder'd horse.
"Ah, scurvy Fortune!" the traveller said,
"This is what comes at the last, I see,"
(And the poor wretch ruefully shook his head)
"Of running about in search of thee.
Here am I, ruin'd, and half-starved dead!
And what is henceforth to become of me?"
The host heard this, and "Both board and bed
You may earn, if you will. Rest here," said he.
"Who works for his bread hath a right to be fed

And that's better than starving, or stealing, at least.

Take service with me. And endeavor to be
Of some use now to this broken-down beast
You have used so ill." Tho' it be but stale,
Sweeter, no doubt, than the bread of the jail
Is the bread that is earn'd. To his evil case
Our traveller had no choice but submit
With a grieving heart and a grateful face,
And, bitterly earning his daily bit
Of bread, and his nightly truss of straw
(For the moneyless man must work, if he can,
And to jail, if he can't, and that is the law)
The master-turn'd-servant now served, alas,
The brute that had brought him to this sad pass.

PART III.

Time fled. To the door of that inn one day,
Came, at nightfall, a carriage with horses four.
Wealthy and healthy, good-humor'd and gay,
Did its occupant look. Never counting the score,
For his supper he order'd the choicest and best
That mine host could procure for so noble a
guest;

And, as soon as the landlord had shown him his
room,

Inquired if he happen'd to know of a lad
He could recommend as a stable groom.
Said mine host, "Tho' to lose him, your wor-
ship, I'm sad,

There's a poor fellow here I can well recommend."
Then for Fortune's unfortunate follower (glad
To get rid of him thus) the rogue hasten'd to
send.

For he thought to himself "What a lucky chance,
To oblige a man of such station
By the much-desired deliverance
From that beggar's prolong'd starvation!"

But fancy the face of the rascal, when
To his wonder he witness'd those two men
(His great rich guest and his stable boy)
With a cry of recognition and joy
Rush into the arms of one another,
As the first exclaim'd, "O friend! O brother!
Have I found thee at last? I have sought thee
long.

And how changed, dear friend! Hast thou suffer'd wrong?"

Mine host would have spoken. But here the door
Was shut in his face, and he heard no more.

PART IV.

What he might have heard, had his wealthy guest
Not lock'd him out that he should not hear,
Was (after the poor man's joy was express'd
At tasting once more in his life good cheer,
And feeling his hand by a good friend press'd)
The admiring question, "But tell me, pray,
Since *you* have discover'd it, favor'd one,
The way to Fortune." "I know no way,"
The other replied, "tho' to Fortune alone
My wealth I owe." "By what lucky chance?
A lottery? — or an inheritance?"

"The latter. That horse which she gave me
Is dead long since, and I am his heir."

"The heir of a horse, friend? How can that
be?"

The same, to look at, our two steeds were.
Mine's now but a damaged beast, as you see.
How happens it yours was a millionaire?"

"Listen. I gallop'd at first, like you;
But, perceiving, after a day or two,
That I lost my labor, and, what was worse,
Without filling my belly had emptied my purse,
I began to consider the shortest way
Of simply getting from day to day.

Now, for this mine own two legs would do
Just as well as my horse's four; and so
'I'll kill him,' I thought, 'and the skin of the
beast

Will make me, to still jog on, at least
A dozen stout pairs of shoes; and they
Will cost me nothing for corn or hay!'

So said, so done. My horse I slew.

His flesh for meat to the butcher I sold,
And his tail to a Pacha who, having but two,
Had set his heart on a third. With the gold
Which I got thereby, a barrow I bought
To carry my merchandise about.

For out of the hide of my horse I had wrought
More shoes than I needed, and all were stout.
These others I sold, and increased my store.

And when my stock of leather was out,
As the folk were still eager to purchase more,
Said I again to myself, 'No doubt

It were better for me, so long as my door
The people with purse in hand importune,
Daily to purchase my wares by the score,
If, instead of still running after Fortune,
And so wearing mine own shoes into holes,
I stay where I am, and provide stout soles
For the feet of the fools who to find her fare
By all manner of ways, a motley host.

Since founder'd horses are not so rare
But what I may get them at no great cost.'
It is thus that at last, having beaten dead,
Without riding one of them, horse upon horse,
I find myself where I am, at the head

Of a flourishing business. Leather, of course.
So, in search of Fortune not needing to spend
My days as of old, when we sought her together;
I set out, as you see, to seek after my friend.
And, not having lost any thing, even leather,
Both the one and the other I now find mine.
So here's to Fortune! and pass me the wine.

For what's mine is yours : and we'll share it now,
Old friend, as to seek it of yore we toil'd
Side by side." Then the poor man cried,
As his lean cheek flush'd with a grateful glow,
"I thank thee, Fortune! for now I see
That the best of thy gifts thou hast saved for me,
A friend whom thy favors have not spoil'd!"

EPILOGUE

(INSTEAD OF A MORAL.)

The Fabulist's a pedant, whose profession
Is, with the plainest most precise expression,
To preach in all ways, unto all mankind,
"Be wise and good!" Well for him, if we find
Those speaking contrasts in his text, which spare
The preacher's pains, and of themselves declare
The preacher's purpose! Well, if, on his way,
One with its load, the other with its lay,
Emmet and grasshopper do chance to pass,
Or royal lion and ridiculous ass,
Or crafty fox and over-credulous crow!
For contrasts, clear as these, have but to show
Their faces to us; and, as soon as seen,
All's understood. Moreover, men, I ween,
Without resentment, nay, with laughter glad,
First see their foibles when they see them clad
In fur and feathers, or in hoof and hide.
But ah! not always doth kind Chance provide
Such fortunate occurrences to him
Who pries not only into corners dim
For secret treasures, but in field and street
Questions whatever he may chance to meet;
And often for an answer waits in vain,
Or gets one he is puzzled to explain.
So aid me, Gentle Reader! Staff in hand,
And nose in air, I roam thro' Fable Land;

And sniff the passing wind, and tap the ground,
Ready to seize on all that's to be found;
Keen as a sportsman who, with bag and gun,
In search of game goes beating, one by one,
The bushes all. My prey escapes me not.
But this time there falls only to my shot
A moral tale — too moral thro' and thro'
It may be, for a moral tail thereto.
Nought do I scorn, but all that comes I greet.
And, even as swallows, when the air is sweet,
And Spring's abroad, flit swiftly to and fro,
Come and then vanish ere a man cries "lo!"
So flit these fables, a wing-woven mist,
Before the fancy of the fabulist.
This came, as came the others; on light wing
Swiftly appearing, swiftly vanishing,
'Twixt two unknowns. I caught it as it passed.
"O swallow, swallow, since I hold thee fast,
Tell me thy secret ere I let thee go!"
Thus ever hath it been my wont to do
With these light-wingèd visitants from far,
And sometimes long delay'd their answers are.
But this was in a hurry to be gone,
And answer'd quickly, "Secret have I none.
What can I tell thee which thou dost not see?
Two wings hath Fortune also given to me,
Which now are fluttering to be far away.
Loose me, and let me use them while I may!"
Surprised, I loosed the bird. Away it flew.
And with it fled away the moral too:
Dropping this counsel, as I watch'd it flit
Like Fortune's self — not to run after it.

XII.

COMPOSURE.

I.

SEAWARD from east to west a river roll'd,
Majestic as the sun whose course it follow'd,
Filling with liquid quiet of clear cold
The depths its hushed waves hollow'd.

II.

No wrinkle ruffled that serene expanse;
Till, perched atiptoe on its placid path,
A tiny rock the surface pierced by chance,
Whereat it foam'd with wrath.

III.

Over the depths, indifferent, smooth of pace,
The current with continuous calm had crossed.
Yet lo, a little pin-scratch in the face,
All its repose was lost!



XIII.

SIC ITUR.

I.

BEHOLD yon sleep-soft phantom opaline
(That seems "such stuff as dreams are made
of") rise
And wane, as dreams do from awakening eyne,
Above the woodman's hut. Like one that tries

Uncertain paths, from prison precincts flying,
The frighten'd spectre pauses, turns, and stoops;
Confused, unused to freedom; faint, fast dying.
The breath of liberty descends on it
Fierce as a brigand from his ambush swoops,
And, cowering, see the brow-beat craven flit
Along the tops of the tumultuous trees!
There, pallid patches of its shroud, all torn,
Float, feebly tossing on the fitful breeze
That heaves about these forest haunts forlorn,
And with low mocking laughter murmurs
 "Lost!"
As fades in film the desultory smoke.
But would ye learn what life hath lived this
 ghost?
Listen! for now the wind is in the oak,
Its weary chronicler.

II.

But yesterday
'Twas the fairest child of the Forest green,
From whose waving arms she now wanes away,
A bodiless goblin. Safe, unseen,
The sleek-limb'd hart in his slumber lay
At the foot of her, gladden'd with grassy shade
When the glaring wave of the noon wash'd clean
All shadow away from the open glade.
And the birds, that had dream'd in the far-off
 lands
Of a life to be lived in her leafy boughs,
And had travell'd by night in seafaring bands
Over the ocean to meet and carouse
Here in their fair predestined home,
Blithe music made from her dancing dome.
And the squirrel, that bird who, instead of
 wings,
Hath a spirit within him that soars and springs,

Set her fluttering spray in a tremble sweet
As the tender tremor that mounts and moves
Through the limbs of a maiden whose pulses beat
'Neath the first light touch of a hand she loves.
And the wind, that gossip so indiscreet
(The confidant of the unconfiding)
Ever at eve, when the high day's heat
Was calm'd and cool'd, thro' her branches gliding,
Whisper'd low to the listening wood
Secrets, echo'd from tree to tree,
Yet by none of his listeners understood;
For the pleasure alone, as it seem'd to be,
Of betraying the trust received from many,
Without wrong done to the faith of any.

III.

Art thou weary of wandering
About a noisy world alone?
With plumage soil'd and broken wing
Fly to the Forest, weary one!
For there is the City of Refuge fair,
Where Silence and Repose,
Two lovers banished the earth elsewhere,
Dwell safe from a world of foes.
But unloved was the Forest's restful lot
By the Forest's child who had wander'd not.
The far-off clouds as they wander'd by
She watch'd, and felt with a wishful sigh,
"I would that a wandering cloud were I!
To follow the sun o'er the azure deep,
And catch the last kiss of the dying day,
And bear in my bosom the moon asleep!
With the winds of summer to sport and play,
With the snows of winter from steep to steep,
Wrapped in a mystical mantle gray,
To mount, and pause o'er the world, and peep
At my pictured self in the pools, and stray

Over wide waters and over broad downs,
 Windy sea-beaches and turreted towns,
 Clothing myself in all hues that be,
 And taking all forms that seem fair to me;
 To dream, and create what I dream of, too;
 Float, a white feather thro' fathomless blue;
 Fly, a wing'd dragon, with plumage of flame
 Lurid and purple, strange news to proclaim
 Of the Storm that is plotting to levy wild war
 On the pines, whose tall people his progress bar.
 Then bathe, a bright naiad, at eve, bosom bare,
 All rosy with rapture, in wells of warm air
 By the waves of the sunset bequeath'd as they
 sink,
 For the baths of my beauty, on Ocean's brink;
 And thro' moonlight and midnight to melt out
 of sight
 In the depths of the heavens like a dream of
 delight!
 Ah! dream of delight that dissolves even now!
 For, fasten'd here to the earth below,
 My fingers clutch but the sordid ground
 To whose chill lap is my sad life bound.
 Lost in the crowd of my neighbors, far
 Lonelier thus than the lonely are!
 Divining all, and beholding nought
 Save that which escapeth as soon as sought;
 Seeing only the clouds sail by,
 Hearing only the stray winds sigh,
 Embracing those that, embraced in vain,
 With a careless chirrup depart again.
 Wretchedest life! ah, when will it end?"

IV.

It ended then. Death came to befriend
 Life's longings. A stroke of the hatchet . . .
 one—
 Two—three . . . and that unloved life was
 done.

With a sigh, then a groan, did the tree sink down,
Beating the air with her branches. Blown
About her, leaflets like drops of blood
Sprinkled the sod. On the torn soil stood
But a stump deform'd, like a block that awaits
Some victim dragg'd from his dungeon gates
There to perish. Nought else remain'd
Of the life that had been by itself disdain'd.

V.

Woodsmen and headsmen — doomsmen all —
Are quick at their work. 'Tis a word and a blow.
And that word is a word by the axe let fall,
Stopping life's prate. For from ages ago
Between iron and life is a rancor old,
And the iron emergeth again and again
From the earth's black bowels, his birthplace
cold,
Only to bite, and shed blood, or give pain.

VI.

What did the woodmen want? No more
Than fuel to boil their broth. Not so
The iron, whose rancorous soul was sore
For the want of a victim to fell and lay low.
And forever, as long as the years roll by,
Shall such fellowships in another's woe
(The alliance of Spite with Stupidity)
Be able, as this was, to overthrow
Something beautiful, something high,
Or something that sought to be both,
And seem'd born for a fairer fate
Than to boil Vulgarity's daily broth
On the fire that is fuell'd by Hate.

VII.

The Tree to the clouds did aspire :
The Axe for destruction panted :
The Woodmen wanted to fuel their fire :
And they all of them have what they wanted.

VIII.

In ghastly cloud the ghost of the dead tree,
Finding an issue from the roof, arose,
And, o'er its native forest floating free,
Beheld that ancient City of Repose
Where it had lived and dream'd. Accomplished
now
Both dream and life! It knew itself a cloud.
Fain to its former brotherhood below
It would have whisper'd from its phantom shroud
What phantoms feel, and only phantoms know.
But their yet green and living leaves grew gray,
Paled by its spectral presence as it pass'd,
And shuddering shrank. Slowly it waned away
Into the void, invisible at last!
Yet scattering, as it faded, downward flakes
Of sullen soot that o'er the forest fell
Like lost illusions on a heart that aches
When Hope departs and Memory sighs farewell.

IX.

Follow, O follow with regretful gaze
Those waning orbs that float and fade between
The earth and heaven, i' the void where nothing
stays,
Clouding heaven's azure, shadowing earth's
green!
Desires disbodied. Phantoms. Promises,
Fradulent promises which Life hath given
And Death pretends to keep. Souls of dead days,
Hopes of lost hours; that fade 'twixt earth and
heaven!

We rake the ashes that you leave behind,
 The sole realities that rest of you,
 And there still beggar'd Memory seeks to find
 The gold false Hope to feed his sorceries threw.
 But even these, some day, the hankering wind
 Will scatter in the void, between the blue
 We take for heaven, the green that once was earth.
 Death's silent answers to the cries of birth!



XIV.

DIOGENES OR ALEXANDER?

I.

BOHEMIAN born, but by laborious art
 To perfect polish smooth'd in every part,
 And form'd to shine with frigid grace, acquired
 From that hard lucid style that's most admired,
 A Water-Bottle of the last design
 Glitter'd among the flowers and dishes fine
 That brightly blush'd and proudly beam'd upon
 The festive board of some Amphitryon.

II.

New to the place, he gazed in pure delight
 All round the snowy Saxon damask, bright
 With golden garniture, and florid piles,
 And porcelain shepherds peeping with pert
 smiles
 From Arcadies of Sèvres. Flatter'd pride
 Beam'd out of all his features, as he sigh'd
 "O Form! Form! thou art every thing! Nor yet
 (Beam-bathed and glory-girt) can I regret

That long, laborious, painful preparation
Which form'd me fit for this exalted station.
Yes, Form is every thing. Severe and hard
Its acquisition: but what rare reward
Awaits the acquirer! Common flint was I,
Who, thanks to Form, now glitter radiantly
As any gem. O triumph! not in vain
(*Per aspera ad astra!*) was the pain
That polish'd, point by point, and line by line,
This well-consider'd perfect form of mine!"

III.

But, whilst he mused self-laudatory thus,
Ye gods! what sudden object scandalous
And sinister confronts his casual glance?
A valet pour'd the sparkling wine of France:
And in the bottle, gross, ungainly, black,
From which it foam'd he recognized alack,
A long-forgotten cousin. Sore distressed
For fear this low connection should be guess'd,
The delicate Decanter sigh'd aghast,
"How hath that blackguard turn'd up here at
last?
Whence comes he? Talk of Form, indeed!
O fie,
The clumsy sloven! what vulgarity!
He hath not even wash'd his face, I'll swear,
Nor brush'd his coat. 'Tis cobwebb'd. What
an air
Of back-slum unacknowledgeable life!"

IV.

If one had struck him with a carving-knife,
No greater shock could have been dealt thereby
To that fine sense of strict propriety
Which made our poor friend, even when in a
passion,
The mould of Form and water-glass of Fashion.

Still greater wax'd the wonder of it all,
 When neither host nor guests one word let fall
 Of passing reprobation or disgust,
 As more such shabby upstarts forward thrust
 Their necks, and spouted. To a pitch it grew
 When, after each had pour'd libations new,
 In ladies' eyes a deeper starlight danced,
 More briskly round the rippling converse
 glanced,
 Or sparkled off in spray of laughter light,
 The wise grown witty, and the dull grown bright.
 And, when at last the sprightly feast was done,
 And from the board its merry guests all gone,
 (The portly Banker-Prince; the last Prose-Poet,
 New to the world though he profess'd to know it;
 The Wit, who had out-dined a generation
 Of other wits, who dined for reputation;
 The famous Traveller, fresh from Timbuctoo;
 The last survivor left of Waterloo;
 The year's five Beauties, each in rival trim)
 Not one of all of them had noticed him,
 Tho' keen observers were they, all and each.

V.

Left to himself (as on a desert beach
 A limpet by an ebb'd-out tide) among
 The silent sideboard's stationary throng
 Of glassy things, he spied an old Carafe;
 Cracked, and so out of service; but still safe
 From the sad fate of commoner cracked glass,
 Since sole survivor of a set that was
 Beauteous and precious in its time, tho' now
 No more the fashion. And, relating how
 His feelings had been shocked, "Dear Madam,
 deign,"
 Said he, "this contradiction to explain."

VI.

"Alas!" the Old Beauty answer'd with a sigh,
 "Young friend, none better can do that than I.
 O pleasant *petits soupers* of the past!
 Wild, wicked, witty evenings, gone so fast!
 How unremember'd are their mirth and grace!
 'Twas there the rogue was in his natural place,
 Whose presence disconcerted you to-night.
 'Twas there he reign'd, the soul of all delight,
 All laughter. Ah, and those fair dames were
 sly!
 We pour'd them out our pure propriety
 In vain. For form's sake, they vouchsafed three
 sips,
 Returning ever with their pretty lips
 To his pert fountain. Ay, and then, O child,
 What fun, what frolic, what adventures wild,
 What scandals I have seen, and I could tell!
 And all this rascal's doing. Well, child, well,
 Give him his due. I said, and still I say,
 The rogue's a rogue, but in a sort of a way
 There's something good in him." The old
 Carafe,
 Looking like a diaphanous giraffe,
 (The *nec plus ultra* of all disproportion
 'Twixt neck and body — a sedate distortion)
 Said this with such an air as ladies old
 Assume when they break off a tale half told,
 But leave the purport of it plain enough,
 Clinching their last word with a pinch of snuff.

VII.

"But," said the novice, growing thoughtful,
 "why,
 Dear madam, is it, then, that you and I,

Whose form is perfect, lack the charm which
still

With such sweet influence doth inform and fill
What flows from him who hath no form at all ? ”

“ Hey ! ” said the old one, “ Man is what I call
The greatest paradox in all creation,
And I can give no other explanation.

One thing he thinks, and does another thing :
Makes money, saves it, and, when saved, doth
fling

His money out o’ window : ne’er hath found
His best friends out till they lay underground :
Only consults his health when it is gone :

And if he values virtue, I, for one,
Believe he does so simply for the sake
Of vice, which virtue doth by contrast make
More to his taste. For all his folly flows
From that one drop of wisdom Heaven bestows
In mockery on him for no use at all.

He boasts his elevation in his fall ;
And still, the lower that he lies, the more
He deems his natural place was high before.
Height measures he by depth, seeks peace in
strife,

And calls all this the Poetry of Life.”

VIII.

“ But,” cried the young one, “ what has that to do
With our low cousin ? and how, even so,
Does he contrive to make such a sensation ? ”

“ Child, ’tis a sort of natural inspiration
Which men, who persecute by turns and pet it,
Ignore first, then o’er-rate, and then forget it.
’Tis not worth getting, if it could be got.

As, just investigate the woful lot
Of those to whom ’tis given, and you’ll find.
One bright spark wandering on a midnight wind !
Our friend’s a being, call him what you will,

Of genius; who has simply turn'd out ill,
 As genius generally does. Do you
 So envy him? That's more than you would do,
 Knew you but how, till just an hour before
 His recent triumph, which so soon was o'er,
 The poor wretch fared. A dingy outcast he,
 Who unobserved, till chance his lot set free,
 Lay dark in silence, solitude, and cold.
 Such was his past. His future? Oh, soon told!
 How fares he now? Thro' yonder window peep,
 You'll see him lying on a loathsome heap
 Of stable ordures in the base back yard.
 And if his fall, which must have hurt him hard,
 Hath not yet shatter'd him, some scavenger,
 Raking among the unsavory refuse there
 In search of fallen and forgotten things,
 Where blue flies buzz and the rank nettle
 springs,
 Will haply filch him from his filthy lair.
 What next? In some grim garret, Heaven
 knows where,
 Methinks I see our miserable friend
 Serving to hold the bit of candle-end
 By whose sick, smoky, feeble flame he'll see
 Some other genius, badly off as he,
 Pouring on paper the portentous proem
 Of some sublime unpurchasable poem.
 Another kind of wine-flask, full of froth
 Most evanescent! And the fate of both
 Is, trust me, miserably much the same.
 A life's discomfort for a moment's fame!
 Our lot is better. Not much use are we;
 But folks, at least respect us — as you see."

IX.

The young Decanter mused; nor made reply.
 Save by an inward meditative sigh;
 Which we translate, as well as we are able,
 By the famed query which preludes this fable.

XV.

A LEGEND.

"Die Tugend erwartet ihren Lohn in jener Welt ; die Klugheit hofft ihn in dieser ; das Genie weder in dieser noch in jener : es ist sein eigner Lohn."*—SCHOPENHAUER, ii. 260.

It was the eve of the day
Which for the sake of St. Peter
Christendom honors : and he,
Being the Porter of Heaven,
Pray'd St. Thomas to take
Charge of Heaven's gate for a while ;
Since on the morrow himself
Needs must be present in Rome,
There to receive, and reward,
Christendom's praise and its pence.

Prudent St. Thomas, however,
Is the most scrupulous, most
Conscientious of saints.
Conscientious, because
He, the Celestial Empiric,
Even in high metaphysics
Follows the physical method,
Experimental, exact ;
Judging of things for himself,
Never dismissing a doubt
Till he hath probed it and proved.

Therefore St. Thomas refused,
Firmly refused, to take charge
Of the Celestial Gate,
(Lest he should thereby incur
Charge, too, of error—the Church
Holds for a damnable sin)

* Virtue awaits its reward in the next world ; Ability in this ; Genius in neither. Genius is its own reward.

Save on condition that first
Peter should point to him out
Whom, without risk of himself
Being thereby taken in,
He into Heaven might take.

Peter, tho' firm as a rock,
Knows that a point may be gain'd
Best by not arguing it.
"What!" he replied, "only that?
Good! since you will, be it so!
Brother, between you and me,
'Tis but a sinecure. Still,
Better prevention than cure.
Put on your hat. We have time."
Safe, then, he fasten'd the Gate,
Popp'd in his pocket the keys,
Hail'd the first cloud that came by,
Into it jump'd with St. Thomas,
And in a trice the Apostles
Travell'd together to town.

"Now," said St. Peter, "observe!
Over their heads who must die
Ere the night's done, you'll perceive
Trembling a little blue star."
"Ay," said the other, and lo!
Everywhere round him he saw
Hanging o'er hundreds of heads
Tremulous little blue stars.

Heeding not any of these,
Peter, however, went on.
Thomas was fain to ask why.
"Oh," said the Porter of Heaven,
"These are no cattle of ours.
Look at them closer, you'll see!"

Then did St. Thomas perceive
Station'd in charge of them all

Pert little sentinel imps
Clad in the colors of Hell.

Groaning, he made with his staff
Many a sign of the cross;
Which by those sentries satanic
Was, with a deference mock,
Duly saluted, as on
Through the iniquitous town
Pass'd the two Saints with a sigh.

Reaching the suburb, where sin,
Wedded to misery, tastes
Something of hell upon earth,
There in a hovel they saw,
Stretch'd on a sack of foul rags
Feebly, an old poor man.
Over the old man's head
Trembled a little blue star.

"Brother, bear him in mind.
He is," sigh'd Peter, "alas,
The only one of them all
Whom, ere the morrow, in Heaven
Thou shalt receive to his rest.
All that was not in our gift
He upon earth has refused,
Trusting to us for his all.
All we can give him, we owe.

"Therefore the soul of this mar,
When it to Heaven returns
Pure as from Heaven it came,
Bear thou, asleep on thy bosom,
Into the meadow of God,
Sweet with the innocent breath
Breathed by the children who died
Pure in the moment of birth.

“Threescore and ten are the years
God to the life of this man
Gave: and to him they have given
Poverty only, and pain.
Now, in the moment of death,
Nothing of him do they leave
Which is not innocent, sweet,
Simple, and pure as the soul
Breathed by the Giver of Life
Into the babe that is born.
Truly he hath his reward.
Now let us go.”

But “O stay!”
“Still,” said St. Thomas, “I see
Two men yonder, and lo!
Hovering over their heads
Tremble two little blue stars.
Yet can I nowhere perceive
Sentry satanic or guard
Set for the souls of those men.
Surely for them there is hope?”

“Yonder magnificent mansion!
Is he the lord of it, he
Who, while the death-star unheeded
Brightens his serious forehead,
Seems to be pondering, planning,
And counting the chances of life?
Life, for the will and the purpose,
Ay, and the lion-like power,
Pent in the brain that makes broad
That man’s mountainous brow,
Such life, sure, hath a value
Not to be lost in the tomb?”

“He?” with contemptuous accent,
Shrugging his shoulders, the old
Much-experienced Apostle
Mutter’d in answer, “he

Knows how to shift for himself.
Let him. His wits are his own.
All that on earth was to get
This man hath ask'd for and gotten.
Nothing owe we to this man.

"Ay, 'tis a notable head!
What will he do with it? Brother,
That is not Heaven's affair.
Tell him as much when he comes
Knocking to-night at the Gate.

"Oh, he will come, never doubt!
Come where there's aught to be got.
Eagerly ask for it too.
Such is the way with them all.
Well, let him get what he can,
So as he gets it himself.
Tell him we owe it him not.
Doubtless he hath his reward."

"Good!" said St. Thomas, "but wait!
What of the other? Behold,
There is he, standing alone
High on the brow of the hill,
Wrapt in a glory that streams
Over his form and his face
Fair from the fall of the sun.

"Pale is his forehead and pure,
Deep is the fathomless eye
Fixed on that source of a light
Fading away from its gaze.
Solemn and sweet is the face,
Saintly the mien of that man,
Even as one that regards
Calmly the coming of calm."

Peter had paused. And he too
Gazed on the man, and was still.
“Well?” whisper’d Thomas, “Reply!
“Him, at the least, I admit?”
Silently shaking his head,
Peter still answer’d him not.

“What!” cried the questioning Saint,
“Heaven, is it grudged to a guest
Who in his soul, as I think,
Hath it already? who seems
One of the few, the elect,
Sign’d by the sigil of God?”

Still, without answering, still
Lost in his own meditations,
Silently shaking his head,
Peter vouchsafed in reply
Only a negative nod.

“Speak!” cried St. Thomas. “Explain!
Porter of Heaven, to him
Must I not open the Gate?”

“No.”—“What, refuse him admittance?”
“No.”—“In the name, then, of patience,
What must I do, Brother Saint?
Thomas my name is, not Job.”

Sighingly Peter replied,
“Brother, the man will not come.”
“Ah,” with a gesture of joy
Thomas exclaim’d, “he will live?”

“Brother, to-night he will die.
Die, when yon sun shall have set,
Die, and the life he hath lived,
Beauteous and bright as the sun,
Shall, with the sun, pass away.

All hath that man in himself :
All, and he knows what he hath :
Knows it, and asks for no more.
He is himself his reward."

"Nay, then, what is he, my Brother?
Name me that forehead, those eyes!"

Then did the holy Apostle
Stretch, with a gesture fraternal,
Forth to the man on the mountain
Solemnly his right hand :
Waving a mute benediction
Whilst, in the ear of the Saint
Who to him listen'd in wonder,
Softly he whisper'd these words :
Words which all Nature receiving
Echo'd with answering thrills :

"That which hath all in itself,
All without any condition,
All without any restriction,
What can it want or demand?
Having within it, and feeling,
Comprehending, enjoying
All things, nothing is left it,
Nothing, to ask or to get.

"Three men are call'd out of life.
One shall be welcom'd above,
One be lamented below.
Pure was the life of the first,
Potent the life of the second.
Each was an effort rewarded :
One its reward hath in Heaven,
One its reward upon Earth.

"Not so the life of the third.
There is no effort in this,
Therefore for this no reward.

“Man, it was, named the creation.
 What was the name of it, think you,
 Ere man himself had a name?
 Here is the Thought that created
 Finding itself in creation,
 Feeling and knowing itself,
 And in that knowledge rejoicing.
 GENIUS men call it on earth.”

 XVI.

THE RAINPOOL.

PRELUDE.

I.

THE water flows, and it never stops.
 And the water is many, although it is one:
 One made up of innumerable drops,
 Each with a life to itself alone.
 And the life of them all is the life of the sea;
 Which is but a drop no longer single,
 When, being socially-minded, he
 With his brother drops doth move and
 mingle.
 For, fling but a poodle in it, and lo!
 When he shakes himself, as a dog will do,
 How many and merry the drops re-appear!
 Yet each, meanwhile, tho' you were not able
 To see him, was there, in his own small sphere,
 Busy and brisk. Let who will give ear
 To this (what is it?) that drops from me,
 Dropt, to find — whatever that be —
 Its fate in the world: a tale — a fable —

A truth perchance — but I know not what.
 And, if my fable share the lot
 Of its little heroes, and fall forgot,
 What matter? It is but a drop in the ocean,
 As they were once. With an unseen motion
 Hovering hid in the happy air,
 Social wanderers next they were.
 Till, lured through the azure heats aloft
 By the wooing sun, so strong, yet soft,
 And then caught by the cold of the upper
 heaven,
 To the realms afar,
 Where the polar star
 Hath his palace of ice, these drops were driven.
 There, chill'd by the power
 Of the north again,
 In a resonant shower
 Of riotous rain
 A whirlwind chased them over the main;
 Till, mad with mirth
 To have reach'd the earth,
 They leaped, when their need of escape was
 sorest,
 Down on a Pomeranian forest;
 Rattled his wrinkled oak-leaves shrill,
 And made his deep glens hiss and thrill.

II.

Some of them fell in the soft moss under,
 And lay there a-quiver with glad bright wonder:
 Till, forced to shun the importunate sun,
 Thro' the spongy soil their way they worm'd
 Into a Secret Society, form'd
 Of operative springs. By these
 With welcome somewhat cold and chary,
 Tho' waxing warmer by degrees,
 As merely members honorary

They were elected. But, in course
Of time, their due probation o'er,
Each to the rank of a mineral source
Promotion gain'd ; and gather'd store
Of mineral salt and mineral ore ;
Purgative, stimulant, sedative, tonic ;
Then, travelling about on their own account
With sulphur, or iron, or acid carbonic,
They founded many a famous fount,
Made their fortunes, and all fared well,
At Carlsbad, Vichy, or Aix la Chapelle.

III.

Some of them fell on the mountain flanks ;
Leaped into the first fresh torrent they found,
And, down to the valley in vigorous ranks
Gambolling, sprang with a buoyant bound
Over the wheel of the water-mill ;
Whirl'd the reluctant monster round,
And set themselves with a blithe good will
To the sawing of wood : then wander'd, still
And serious, into the lower sluices ;
Whence, putting their strength to social uses,
They carried down to the busy town
Many a barge-load's heavy weight
Of flour, and timber, and chalk, and slate,
And . . . But you must not expect me to state
Every detail, or my breath would fail
Before I am come to the end of my tale.
Suffice it to say, that day by day
They did their duty, work'd their way,
In this world's business took their share,
And earn'd their wages, whatever those were.

IV.

But the others? They whose lot
 Lured me first to tell this story?
 Undiscover'd drops, that got
 Neither gain, nor grace, nor glory,
 How fared they?

V.

In a showery spray,
 Brisk as emmets, and as many,
 Fast they speeded, unsuspecting,
 Down each wrinkle, chink, and cranny
 Of the tree they chanced on. "This"
 Thought they all, nor thought amiss,
 "Is the road most expeditious."
 Ah, most expeditious — yes!
 To what end, tho'? Who can guess,
 Who declare, the end of any
 Road that earthly travellers wend?
 Even the end of this, my fable,
 I to tell you am not able
 Until I have reach'd the end.

PART I.

That tree's brown roots, like bronzen snakes
 that bind
 Some Fury's formidable brows, had wrought,
 And rampired deep from reach of sun or wind,
 A dismal pit, where those poor drops were
 caught.

The cloud was emptied, and the storm was gone;
 The heavens all stainless, and the forest still.
 The water, wondering, to itself, alone,
 Whisper'd, and sigh'd with a regretful thrill.

“Was birth a snare, then? and is life a lie?
And is this all that we were born to be?
Where are the waves, and where the winds?
Ah, why,
Why have we loved and lost them? What
are we?”

“What is the meaning of this passion, fill’d
With pining memories of the infinite tide,
If here forever, straighten’d, stain’d, and still’d
Thus to a stagnant pool, we must abide?”

There was no answer — save the want of one.
Silence, obscurity, and solitude!
Scarcely a gleam from the leaf-hinder’d sun,
Thro’ the dense umbrage of that gloomy wood

Scarcely a sound, save of the fleeting roe,
Or the faint flutter of some vagrant bird:
No change: no choice: no happy come-and-go:
Nought to be seen, and little to be heard.

But, in their season, swarms of stinging flies,
That claim’d that lonesome lakelet for their
own,
There laid white egglets; whence anon did rise
Little red worms that wriggled up and down.

And, once, a headlong acorn, misbegotten,
Splash to the bottom of the pool did drop,
Like a dead body, blacken’d, swell’d, wax’d
rotten,
Burst, and again upfloated to the top.

Also, an old toad hobbled to the brink,
And squatted there; so still, she might be
dead,
Save that her small black eyes at times did wink,
And, winking, sparkle in her spotty head.

PART II.

For months and months that melancholy toad
 (Rapt in profound and sombre revery)
Her loathsome presence on the place bestow'd.
 Eftsoons ! sole mistress of the place was she.

For neither buck nor doe did ever come,
 Nor any bird, to drink of that dark pool.
But gnats around it swarm'd with sullen hum
 At noontide : and at evening, in the cool,

Leaflets, above it, babbled to the breeze,
 Babbling about some business of their own ;
A vague monotonous murmur, hard to seize,
 Of many voices, in a speech unknown,

Full of mistrust and mystery ; nor aught
 The little pool could understand of it.
Deep in its own dark bosom a dull thought,
 Brightening at moments ere it faded, lit

With vexing visions of a grandeur gone
 The water's stagnant gloom. In dreams again
It heard the thunderous billows bursting on
 The wind-blown beaches of the roaring main ;

And, fool'd by fancy, felt, or seem'd to feel,
 Once more the rapture of a wandering life,
The chase of cloud and bird, of sail and keel,
 Thro' sea and sky, — bright rest or buoyant
 strife !

Its *will*, at least, was not unworthy yet
 To roam the rosy coral reefs, and roll
Fantastic shells with briny dewdrops wet,
 Or brilliant seabuds, in a sparkling shoal.

Up slumbrous bays of sunny-bosom'd sands,
 Where plummy palm-groves slope to purple seas
 Far in the light of lonesome fairy-lands.
 And it recall'd with shuddering ecstasies

A memory of white stars, that did whilom,
 Down from the heaven of the high summer
 night,
 Trembling all over with pure passion, come
 To bathe in its clear calm their splendors
 white;

And winds, wild horsemen of the boisterous
 North,
 Who from their skyey coursers leapt, to seize
 And in tumultuous dances whirl it forth
 Over the tumbling and bewilder'd seas.

PART III.

And now? Was all this a delirium, dream'd
 By famished Fancy? Had the flimsy hum
 Of flies and gnats the sea's deep music seem'd?
 And was that acorn, floating in the scum,

That bloated acorn, right when she derided
 What to her hollow maggot-eaten husk
 The miserable pool with sighs confided
 Of those bright thoughts which thrill'd it in
 the dusk?

The squelch'd nut counsell'd the reluctant
 water
 To learn life's lesson of the loathsome toad,
 "A sorceress she! in all the wood none greater:
 Hath roam'd the world thro', and knows many
 a road.

"She'll tell you, nothing is without a reason.
 The flies and gnats (perchance the old toad too)
 Enjoy themselves here in the summer season,
 And doubtless fare the better, friend, for you.

"Reflect on that, and be not so dejected.
 Contentment, truly, is the best of things.
 We cannot all be all that we expected.
 I, too, have had mine own imaginings.

"And I myself, when I was green and glowing,"
 (The hollow nut said), "I myself, in truth,
 Was plagued with whims and wishes. For my
 growing
 The heavens then seem'd not high enough!
 'Twas youth

"And the green sickness. 'Why, my pretty Miss,'
 Whisper'd the old toad, 'dream brisk youth
 away?'
 And introduced me, as you see, to this
 Good lusty playfellow, that's ever gay."

The while she spake, up popp'd, with beaded
 eyes,
 A fat white worm, self-confident and vain,
 Stared at the world with impudent surprise,
 And slunk into the hollow nut again.

"For these, then, am I here?" dismay'd thereat,
 The wretched pool complain'd. "For these
 alone?
 Toadstool and toad, and worm, and fly, and gnat?
 All for their profit, nothing for mine own?"

And its face darken'd, and more dismal grew
 Its turbid being; and a filthy weed
 Over its film'd and stagnant surface drew
 Nets to catch sportive spiders; and a breed

Of brassy-headed, spongy-bodied buds
Pimpled the slippery banks of that black
pool;
And slugs and snails, dull lazy brotherhoods,
Lived at their ease there in the gloom and
cool.

PART IV.

The Summer smoulder'd into ashes red
And dim upon the boughs. Sad Autumn
sigh'd,
And, sighing, shook them till they rose and fled.
Translucent grew the wood's gray roofage
wide.

A whirlwind came, and swept the branches bare,
And in between them widen'd the blue night.
The night was clear and chill. The wintry air
Was thrilling; and the stars shone thro' it
bright.

Then that forlorn and sullen pool began
To feel as tho' it were the mystic breath
Of mighty spirits approaching. Rapture ran,
Sharp as fierce anguish, thro' the shuddering
sheath

By weary Wont and sordid Custom spun
To hold and hide keen instincts long sup-
pressed,
Which now, all tremulously, one by one,
Leaped to wild life within the water's breast.

For far above it (far, and yet not far,
Swift-changing to a nearness yet not near)
A sudden glory smote it. And a star,
Fall'n in its depths, with throbbing splendor
clear

Kindled them all. And the star whisper'd there,
"Child of Eternity, despair not thou!
Unenvying, tho' despised, let others wear
The flaunting robe, and deck the boastful brow

"With the brief diadems of summer days,
Soon scatter'd by the wind. Do thou resign
To those that seek it Earth's near-sighted praise,
Born to reflect Heaven's distances divine!

"Measure thy being's depth by the sublime
Celestial and immeasureable height
Of what is imaged in it. Here, in Time,
(Brief if it be, tho' brief yet infinite)

"Their hour of consciousness arrives at last
To all the children of Eternity,
Once always, if once only. Thou, too, hast
Thy destined hour. I will return to thee.

"Despair not." And the image of the star,
Slowly receding from their surface, left
The conscious waters comforted, as are
Spirits which, self-discover'd, tho' bereft

Of earthly converse, have held commune high
Once, if once only, with the heavens above.
Then, while the clear cold of the wintry sky
Grew slowly solid thro' the frost-bound grove,

Slowly those waters cover'd themselves o'er
With crystal pale; whose purifying power
Cleansed all it calm'd and shelter'd till once
more
That promised star return. To each his hour!

XVII.

CONTAGION.

A BROOKLET, born above a mountain moor,
Down to the level of the world below
Perforce descending, past a dyer's door

Foul with pollution thro' the plain did
flow.

The waters of this brooklet from on high,
Still pure and splendid as the spotless
snow,

Beneath them could their sunken sisters
spy

All soil'd and spoil'd, as when spilled wine doth
stain

A pot-house floor. Whereat they brawl'd out
"Fie!"

A traveller, who had climb'd the hill with
pain,

And knew the world beneath it far and
wide,

Smiled at the inexperienced disdain

Of those immaculate waters, and replied,

"Wait, pretty fools, until down there you
get.

Had they not pass'd the dyer's door, undyed

And white as you would be those waters
yet."

XVIII.

AURORA CLAIR.

"Arma habent quia iram habent." *

(The Fabulist offers this fabulous lay
To the Dons that he knows. No Don Juans are they.)

I.

SHYLY shunning the sound and glare
Of the tumultuous thoroughfare,
By black back streets where the moonless sky
In a sallow sluice 'twixt the housetops high
Flow'd, silent save for the distant drum
Of the throbbing town with its human hum,
Its feet that flutter, and wheels that whirl,
Aurora Clair, the weaving-girl,
Walk'd home to her father's house; where thin
Weak ragged skirts of the town let in
Long rural patches thro' lanes obscure.

II.

Aurora Clair was a maiden pure
Of body and soul, as the Mother Maid
To whom this motherless maiden pray'd
At morn and eve in her chapel small
Of the great gray church, that hath room for all,
The rich and the poor, and the old and young,
The whole year round, and the whole day long.
And in virgin blossom as nobly fair
Of form and face was Aurora Clair
From head to foot as a queen should be,
Tho' only a poor man's child was she;

* *Δια το θυμον εχειν οπλον εχει* — They have arms because they have anger. — Aristotle.

Who early and late, with good cheer unchid,
Work'd for bread as her father did.
She at her loom, where she wove and spun
The quaintest creation under the sun,
Wild men with crowns and wild beasts with
horns,
Pards, griffins, lions, and unicorns :
He with his chisel and graving-knife,
Whereby he wrought to a wondrous life
Frame and panel, that under his hand
Burst into blossoms of fairy-land.

III.

'Twas the night of the City Saint's Feast Day.
By the side of Aurora all the way
(Proud of his tenth year turn'd) with joy
Ran, merrily carolling, rosy Roy,
Her garrulous, gold-hair'd, bright boy-brother.
The city was swarming, the suburbs were still.
The boy and the maiden took care of each other.
There was nobody else to take care of them. Ill
(To that saint's dishonor) at home in bed
Their father was lying. Their mother lay chill
In the churchyard grass with a cross at her head.

IV.

Beauty, Innocence, Feebleness !
In risk and peril these roam by night
Thro' a great town's populous wilderness.
As Aurora found : when with footstep light
The children, to shorten their homeward way,
Cross'd into the great suburban square ;
Which, emptied now of its idlers, lay
In a vacant monotony, all as bare
Of an image responsive to ear or eye
As the silent brain of the fool ; save where
Some Ædile (encouraging art thereby)
Had set up the statue, in bronze brand-new,

Of that famous darling of chivalry,
Who neither fear nor reproach e'er knew.
For which reason perchance, or to save its
pence,
The City's Municipal Providence
Vouchsafed not even one lamp, which might
With its humble halo have served to mark
The spot, now dark and deserted quite,
Where the sworded statue stood in the dark.

V.

There, a voice, no Bayard's, as by went she,
The virgin scared. 'Twas the vulgar voice
Of a burly Don Juan who, bold and free,
With speech to the point, and more plain than
choice,
His prey pursued. And the night was late,
The spot deserted, the neighborhood lone.
Fierce indignation, by fear made great,
Wild cries for help that were heard by none,
Tears, struggles, and prayers, — what avail were
they
From the prowler's clutch to release his prey?

VI.

Then Aurora Clair, in her extreme need,
Lifting her looks to the midnight sky
Saw there (as tho' Heaven had taken heed,
And sent him to answer her helpless cry)
Sworded and helm'd, on his stately steed,
The form of the gallantest Christian knight
Of the whole world's gallantest Christian nation,
With his right arm raised as in act to smite.
And, "O Bayard," she cried with the inspiration
Of a sudden hope which that welcome sight
Had awaked in her maiden imagination,
"O Bayard, thou champion of chivalry, thou
Fair savior of innocence, save me now!"

VII.

Hoarse laughter greeted the maiden's prayer.
Not much for statues Don Juans care.
"Too rusty the good knight's sword is grown,"
Her tormentor mock'd, as he touch'd his own.
"But thy champion, pretty one, prithee invite
To supper with us at the tavern to-night."

VIII.

Scarce had the insolent jest been utter'd
Ere the laugh changed into a howl of pain
And bewilder'd wrath, as the hot blood sputter'd,
Cooling that boisterous boaster's brain.
The arms that were dragging Aurora Clair
Dropp'd; and, as tho' at a god's command,
The brute fell flat on the flintstone there,
Struck in the dark by an unseen hand.

IX.

A miracle! so did Aurora deem;
Whose only lore being folk-lore old
Had fill'd her with faith in full many a dream
Of fairy and magic and knighthood bold.
And she thought that her champion, arm'd in
bronze,
Had really return'd at her invocation
From Elysium, eager to add for the nonce
A fresh renown to his reputation
By rescuing thus from a roisterous churl
That of a poor little weaving-girl.

X.

A miracle? Truly Aurora was right.
And moreover a miracle, no mere dream,
But a fact of miraculous meaning and might,
A dictating flash of the Will Supreme.

For who is it stands at the maiden's side?
 What second superlative apparition?
 Her own child-brother: but glorified
 By the transfiguring intuition
 (Never to noble emotion denied)
 Of a sudden supreme self-recognition:
 Which hath left its flash in the eyes' deep light,
 And its pulse in the nostril panting wide,
 And its merciless might in the marble-white
 Firm lips lock'd fast as a fort defied,
 And fists by triumphant intention tight
 Clinch'd with fate in their fingers fixed.
 'Tis an image of awe and of beauty mixed.
 For the form of the child is a child's no more,
 But a half-god's, hero's, or saint's, of yore;
 Which its own supernatural inward heat
 To a supernatural height hath raised.
 Even so on Goliath dead at his feet
 Might an infant David have gazed.

XI.

One moment, swift and yet infinite,
 Had reveal'd to Roy, as by lightning-light,
 A danger for her whose defender strong
 He believed himself, with a pride proved true:
 The infernal approach of a nameless wrong:
 A deed to prohibit, a deed to do.
 Not a moment's doubt! not a questioning fear!
 Once the duty known, are the means not clear?
 Or, the foe being there, is the weapon not here?

XII.

The weapon! what weapon? This child, half-
 clad,
 Weak, ignorant — what were the means it had,
 What weapon sought it, what weapon found,
 For smiting, bathed in his blood, to the ground

That gay cavalier, whose sword at his side
In the starlight shone with a saucy pride?

XIII.

Doubter! learn, then, and understand
There is everywhere, ever, a stone at hand
For the arm that is seeking the means of death.
A philosopher said, and this fabulist saith,
Nature adapts to the use of her lord
The implements that she forges.* Sword
And shield lack never where'er there be
A soldier ready to use them. He
Who, having a cause for which to fight,
Hath also courage and will to smite,
Finds waiting for him in pebble or reed
Just such a weapon as serves his need.

XIV.

Statues we, too, have seen and known.
Irreproachable their renown!
Perfectly polished in every part,
Models were they of immaculate art.
Noble the names of them, lofty the mien,
Uncontested the fame serene.
Each every pace of his Pegasus knew,
And could pass with applause thro' a classic
review
Upon galloping dactyl or spondee sedate,
With the requisite word at the regular rate.
And so, to the pure statuesque in time
Promoted, there they repose sublime.

* ταδ' ὄργανα πρὸς τὸ ἐργὸν ἢ φύσις ποιεῖ, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ
ἐργὸν πρὸς τὰ ὄργανα. — For Nature accommodates the in-
struments to the work, not the work to the instruments. —
Arist.: *De Part. Animal*, lib. iv. cap. 12.

XV.

Well, and good ! But O statues fair,
 Why so deaf to our desperate prayer ?
 Draw your swords and defend us, pray !
 Cannot you hear what the challengers say ?
 Quick, to the rescue ! and, undefeated,
 Save that importunate maid, maltreated
 Much by her modern admirers bold,
 Perishing Poesy ! Ah ! still cold
 And stolid, you stand on your pedestals tall
 Solemn, but solemnly helpless all.
 Whilst they woo her, pursue her, would fain
 enjoy her,
 But shame her at best, and at worst destroy her.
 Feel and be men, then ! The cause of our harm is
 That hearts *sine ira* leave hands *sine armis*.



XIX.

LOST TREASURES.

PART I.

It was the splendid winter-tide.
 And all the land was thrilling white,
 And all the air was still and bright
 With a solemn and songless sunshine wide,
 Whose gorgeous uncongenial light
 Harden'd whatever it glorified.

And while that glory was streaming amber
 Into a childhood-haunted chamber,
 A child, at play by the lattice-sill,
 Where daily the redbreasts begging came,
 Noticed a glittering icicle
 That flash'd in the sun like a frozen flame.

So, plucking it off, he seized and put it
Into a box of gilded paper.

There, to be treasured forever, shut it,
Danced about it with shout and caper,
And then, as a child will do, forgot it.

For suddenly under the lattice roll'd
A music of cymbal and trumpet blent.
And, oh merry and brave it was to behold
The soldiers below, who in scarlet and gold
Marching blithe to the music went.

And after the soldiers, cleaving the cold
Slantwise, shot like a falling arrow,
And perch'd on the sill of the lattice, a bold,
Bright-eyed, sharp-beak'd, hungry sparrow;
Claiming, with saucy, sidelong head,
His accustom'd alms of a crumb of bread,
Tho' to get what he ask'd he would not stop,
But off, with a pert, impatient hop,
Went twittering over the roof instead.

Next follow'd far more than a man can mention
Of in-door claims on a child's attention.
And at last 'twas a whip to whip the top,
And "Oh, where is Grandfather? 'tis he must
find one!"

Then away in a hurry the small feet trot,
Yet pause: for that icicle, first forgot,
And then remember'd all in a minute,
It were surely a pity to leave behind one.

So the treasure-box, with the treasure in it,
Their tiny treasurer carries away.
But ah, what sorrowful change is this
In the box where safely the bright gem lay
Erewhile, a secretly-beaming bliss
To beautify many a winter's day?

For, drop by drop, is the drench'd box dripping,
And the gilded paper is all undone,
And, away in a shower of warm tears slipping,
The deceitful treasure is well-nigh gone.

So, weeping too, with the woful story
(In a passion of grief unreconciled
For the lost delight of a vanished glory)
To the old man hastens the troubled child.

PART II.

Lone by the old hearth was the old man sitting.
He, too, a treasure-box had on his knee;
And slowly, slowly, like sad snow-flakes flitting
Down from the weak boughs of a wither'd tree,
Fell from his tremulous fingers, wet with tears,
Into the embers of the old hearth's fire,
Wan leaves of paper yellow'd by long years:
Letters, that once were treasures.

The Grandsire

Welcomed the infant with a kind, faint smile.
The burning letters, black and wrinkled, rose
Along the gusty flue; and there a while
(Like one who, doubtful of the way he goes,
Lingers and hesitates) along the dark
They hover'd and delay'd their ghostly flight,
Thin sable veils wherein a restless spark
Yet trembled! — and then pass'd from human
sight.

How oft had human eyes in days of yore
Above them beam'd, and with what tender light!
Wherefore, O wherefore, had those eyes no more
Upon them gazed for many a heedless year?
Was not the record which those eyes had read
With such bright rapture in each blissful tear
Still writ in the same letters, which still said

The selfsame words? Ah! why not now, as
 then,
 With the same power to brighten those changed
 eyes?
 Why should such looks such letters meet again
 As strangers? each to each a sad surprise!
 "How pale," the eyes unto the letters said,
 "And wan, and weak, and yellow are ye grown!"
 And to the eyes the letters, "Why so red
 About the rims, and wrinkled? Eyes unknown,
 Nor ever seen before, to us ye seem,
 Save for a something in the depth of you
 Familiar to us, like a life-like dream
 So well remember'd it almost seems true!"

The grandchild weeps upon the grandsire's knee,
 And babbles of his treasure fled away.
 The old man listens to him patiently,
 And tells the child, as tho' great news were they,
 Old tales which well the child already knows,
 And smooths his tumbled curls, and comforts
 him.

The winter day is darkening to its close.
 On the old hearth the dying fire grows dim.

PART III.

The child upon the old man's breast was sleeping,
 The old man stiller than the sleeping child!
 Then slowly, softly, near and nearer creeping
 From book-shelves dark, and dusty papers piled,
 Old thoughts, old memories of the days of old,
 Which lurk'd about that old room everywhere,
 Hidden in many a curtain's quiet fold,
 Panel, or picture-frame, or carven chair,
 All silent, in the silence, one by one,
 Came from between the long-unlookt-at leaves
 Of old books; rose up from the old hearthstone;
 Descended from the old roof's oaken eaves;

Laid spectral hand in hand by twos and threes,
 And then by tens and twenties; circled dim
 Around the old man, on whose tranquil knees
 Still slept the infant; and, saluting him,
 The eldest whisper'd, "Dost thou know us not?
 Many are we who come to take farewell.
 For all departs at last. Ay, even the thought
 Of what hath been. Sunbeam and icicle,
 Childhood and age! The joys of childhood
 perish
 Before the heats of manhood; manhood's heats
 Before the chills of age. Whate'er ye cherish,
 As whatsoe'er ye suffer, fades and fleets.
 What goes not with the heat, goes with the cold.
 For all that comes, goes also. What ye call
 Life, is no more than dyings manifold.
 All changes, all departs, all ends. All, all!"



XX.

CHASSÉ-CROISÉ.

A MAN, together in one cage, immured
 A lion and a dog. The dog endured
 Long while a world of drear indignities
 From that grim housemate; who, without the
 least
 Consideration for his fellow beast,
 Stretch'd himself out at ease
 In the best places; while the other lay
 Crouch'd in a little corner the whole day,
 And gnaw'd, with furtive tooth, the bones
 disdain'd
 By his strong neighbor, surfeited; dry bones
 Gnaw'd bare already. With reproachful moans

The poor dog oft complain'd,
And of the human master of his fate
Besought release from wretchedness too great
For even canine flesh and blood to bear.
But all in vain. His master heard him not,
Or, hearing, heedless of the creature's lot,
To change it had no care.
Doubtless far weightier cares weigh'd on him.

They
Whose daily business is but to obey
Must not be suffer'd to exact from those
Who haply rule the house, — or rule the
State, —
Attention to their feelings or their fate.

For what, if some get blows,
While some are pushed on pleasantly? They
are

Tools to be used, with no particular
Consideration for the private feeling
Of either implement — though this, rough-
handled,
Mops the drench'd flint — that, delicately
dandled,

Brushes the gilded ceiling,
Fares soft, rests oft, and wears a plummy crown;
Whilst, soon worn out, the drudging mop is
thrown

To rot, at last, behind the scullery door.
Little do those that use them care, I ween,
For broom or mop, who care but to sweep clean
The ceiling and the floor.

And, first of all — as touching this dog's lot;
In all the house there was no other spot

Half so convenient as that lion's cage
Wherein to stow the dog. In the next place,
The lion served to give a sort of grace

To the whole house, engage
Attention to it, and make its master's name
Conspicuous: for which reason, it became

The dignity of that illustrious brute
(Tho', save in this respect, and this alone,
The brute was an entirely useless one,
And mischievous to boot)
That join'd to him should be some other creature
Of meaner mark, and more familiar feature,
To show to best advantage all his strength,
And size, and strangeness, and ferocity.
And so the poor dog had no choice, but try
To bear his fate. At length
The lord of both on a far journey went;
Leaving, together in the same cage pent,
The lion and the dog behind him there.
And, in the absence of their master, few,
If any, gave much notice to the two;
Who did but poorly fare.
But when the man from his long pilgrimage
Return'd at last, in that neglected cage
A wondrous change he marvell'd much to find.
For now it was the lion, lean and tame,
That in a corner crouch'd with surly shame,
And, dog-like, cringed and whined;
Whilst, stretch'd at stately length in the best
place,
The dog, with pride becoming better'd case,
(His paw upon a bone) the warning range
Of his suspicious and retentive teeth
Did oft, with supercilious growl, unsheathe.
What caused so great a change?

MORAL.

There's something of a cur that lurks conceal'd
In every lion : something unreveal'd
In every dog of spirit leonine.
Long battle with the overbearing power
Of a brute's senseless selfishness — each hour
That stretch'd the strengthening line

Of wrongs resisted, — had at last aroused
 The something of a lion, nature housed
 In the dog's heart, and made the dog at length
 Superior to superiority
 Wasted for want of aught its strength to try
 Save one of weaker strength :
 As power, meanwhile, by sheer abuse of power,
 Degenerating daily low and lower,
 Had dragg'd the lion's nature from above,
 Down to that coward something of a cur
 Which lurks in every lion's character,
 Like lust, subdued, in love.
 'Tis thus that many a small and feeble state,
 Striving for justice, hath at last grown great :
 Whilst many an empire opulent and vast,
 Down from the eminence, its selfishness
 Disgraces, sinking slow to less and less,
 Dwindles and dies at last.



XXI.

A PHILOSOPHER.

PART I.

I.

ON a breezy knoll, neither hill nor plain,
 But a chance-begotten child of the twain,
 In a land of ridges and flats forlorn
 Where none went by, save the wind in the
 corn,
 Living the life that beseemeth age
 A hermit had chosen his hermitage.

II.

Chosen, it may be, is hardly the word
For a place of abode by fate conferr'd.
But there he was, and he held his ground.
The spot was lone: and the traveller rarely
Paused, as he pass'd it, to gaze around
On the long low fields where the billowy barley
Waved and whiten'd under the wind;
Or the wolds above where the wandering sheep
Slept and browsed, and were sure to find
Nothing to do but to browse and sleep.

III.

Yet, wherever she makes herself at home,
Thought fixes the centre of all creation.
And therefore this hermit, having become
A philosopher, had from his contemplation
Wrought for himself, as the years roll'd by,
A little philosophical system;
Which explain'd to his own satisfaction the why
And the how he was there; and so served to
assist him
To accept and support with a heart heroic
His lot in life. Tho', for my part, I,
Not having in me the soul of a stoic,
Had that lot been mine should have surely
sought
To exchange it for any less drear and lonely.
For, like the giants Don Quixote fought,
— This sage was, in fact, but a windmill only.

IV.

A windmill only? Monotonous hold
Of weary silence and chill neglect!
Yet a pilgrim tribe hath paid from of old
To this hermit homage of high respect.

For a little people there is, that lives
In the woods and fields, and is loved by all
For the songs it sings, and the joy it gives.
And this sweet folk, whose bodies are small
But whose hearts are large, with religious awe
That weather-beaten windmill saw.

V.

The birds ! their ways of living are known,
But who is it knows their ways of thinking ?
'Tis true, and 'tis pity, 'tis true, I own,
But truth is truth and forbids all shrinking,
The birds, whatever themselves may call
Their flighty notions, are heathens quite.
Heathens, and not monotheists at all !
But this, tho' of course it is far from right,
Is yet a defect which they compensate
By adoring a number of gods so great
That perchance it comes in the end to the same,
And adoration suffers no loss.
They adore the sun for his friendly flame,
And the freshening shadow that cools the moss,
They adore the bushes, and banks, and brooks,
And the ruin'd towers we men abandon,
And even the low thatch'd eaves, whose nooks
Are as shrines for their household gods to stand
on.

VI.

What wonder, then, if a windmill be
A demigod to the birds ? For who
But knoweth that four great wings hath he,
Whilst the biggest of birds hath only two ?
And a demigod may as well, I aver,
Be a demi-bird as a demi-man.
They deem'd him the bird of Jupiter,
And this tradition among them ran :

One summer morning Father Jove
Created the Windmill, wanting a fan
To cool his palace Olympian ;
And forbade the celestial bird to move
From the perch assign'd him by Jove's high will.
But, alas for the Windmill ! he fell in love,
Madly in love with the Watermill :
Who then dwelt upon earth. And one dark
night,
"Jove never will find me out," thought he,
As earthward slyly he wing'd his flight
To visit the Watermill ; where she,
Like a maiden demure, was sitting beside
Her spinning-wheel. Doth she mourn for him ?
For he, having chosen (not to be spied)
A night when the Moon was wrapt up to the rim,
And, seeing her not as he pass'd on the sly,
Broke one of her horns with a flap of his wing.
The Moon to Jove complain'd, and thereby
All the gods got a gust of the thing,
And the Windmill was banish'd to earth, but
still
Far away from the Watermill.
That is the reason he looks so sad.
And the Moon keeps turning her face in heaven,
To hide the scar which that night she had
From the Windmill's wing. He is unforgiven.

VII.

Now, albeit their legends admit variation
As to what the Windmill hath been or may be,
In the bird's universal estimation
Some sort of a half-bird-god is he.
And, if for nought else, they would still adore
him,
Because of the grains of corn he strews,
For *their* sakes, over the threshold before him ;
Where they hold high feast, when they get
good news

Of the Miller's mystical visitations.
For is it not Hermes, the herald of Jove,
Bringing the Windmill his daily rations
Of ambrosia sent by the gods above ?

PART II.

I.

One day, when the sacred feast was done,
And the others all flown, there remain'd behind
A certain Sparrow, the only one
Of the birds, be it said, whose habit of mind,
From haunting so much the haunts of men,
Hath taken a sceptical turn. And, when
He perceived that his fellows were gone, said he
To the Windmill, "Listen! It dupes not me,
Thy silence stern, nor thine aspect lonely.
I know thee. Thou art but a windmill only.
Yet, altho' unduped, I applaud thy plan
For being a god. Nay, both will and can
Widely encourage the worship of thee,
But I first cry shares, and must have my due.
I am in the secret, as thou mayst see,
Prithee take me into the profit too.
By the profit I mean the sanctuary.
Thou hast in thy belly good store of grain.
A bargain's a bargain. Why be chary?
Come! let me in. It will be to thy gain.
I shall keep my counsel, and thine, be sure;
And behave as the priest who is up to the trick
Of the oracle bravely contrived to allure
His flock to the shrine, where their offerings stick.
Moreover, the more grains I devour,
The fewer for *thee* to grind into flour."

II.

“Grains, and flour!” the Windmill cried,
 “What wouldst thou, poor little scavenger?”
 But “Marry come up!” the Sparrow replied,
 “No bad names, if you please, old sir!
 You are but a windmill. That we know.”

III.

The Windmill mutter'd, “I care not how
 Nor what I appear to thy bounded ken.
 If thy foolishly-tweeting folk suppose
 That I, too, am a sort of a bird, what then?
 Innocent ornithomorphism! Those
 Small souls can soar thro' the realm of infinity
 To no loftier thought: tho' a mystic sense,
 Guessing in me some part of divinity,
 Gives them a glimpse of the truth immense.
 Men, that are made of a coarser kind,
 Careless concerning the causes of things,
 In the simple effects of them seek but to find
 Their own advantage, and use my wings
 For the sake of the grain which I grant they
 grind;
 Then pick up, and prize as precious stuff,
 The dust which the voyager, voyaging
 To a goal sublime, in his haste shakes off
 From the sole of his foot. But this flour, this
 thing
 That you prattle about, I regard with disdain.”

IV.

Said the Sparrow, flapping a saucy wing,
 “What are you there for, if not to grind grain?”

V.

The Windmill sullenly groan'd, "Go to!
Know'st thou the Wind?" "I should think I do!
Who knows not the Wind?" said the bird.

"The Wind,
That terrible traveller, hungry and blind,
Whose joy is to ravage and overthrow
Whatever is lofty and great! I know
That he pass'd erewhile o'er mine own house-roof,
Thatch'd so thick I had thought it proof
To the wildest weathers that worry the sky,
Yet he shatter'd it all as he pass'd by.
And I know not yet if I now shall find
The means to rebuild" . . .

VI.

"Whence cometh the Wind?"
Interrupted the Windmill, stern.
"How should I know?" said the Sparrow.
"Turn
And look out for thyself when he comes thy way.
And I care not, I, if at home he'd stay,
And not turn other folks out of their home."

VII.

Said the Windmill "Learn whence the Wind
doth come!
The Wind, whose sublime and beneficent nature
Thou fearest, foolish and feeble creature,
Is the brave benefactor of earth and sky.
But who is it giveth him motion? I.
And the Wind, at whose whisper the anchor'd
ship
Thrills like a bride to her bridegroom's lip,
Were it not for me would, in slothful sleep,
Leave not the lap of the languid deep.

But a single stroke of my sturdy wing
 Startles him out of his slumbering.
 A second speeds him away through space,
 And, fearing a third, he hurries apace
 Over earth and thro' heaven, headlong hurl'd
 By the strength made mine for the good of the
 world."

VIII.

The Sparrow could scarce believe his ears.
 After a silence long and perplexed
 "Friend," quoth he, "since it now appears
 From all you say (and who knows what next
 You will bid us believe, audacious prophet,)
 That the wind is waked by your mighty will,
 Give me, prithee, a specimen of it.
 See! not a grass-blade dips on the hill,
 Nor a leaf on the lone thorn trees above it.
 The time is propitious. Lift but an arm,
 Or wave but a wing, and the wild wind charm."

IX.

"The moment is not yet come," unstirr'd
 The other replied, and undiscoconcerted.
 "And when will it come?" said the sceptic bird.
 "I know not when. It can *not* be averted,
 Nor yet commanded," the Windmill averr'd.
 "When the inner voice I hear in me,
 Prompt obedience I render to it.
 But I cannot provoke it. The voice is free
 As the inspiration of seer or poet.
 Thro' all my being, I know not how,
 But I *feel* the mystic impulse run
 Which mingles my life (this much I know)
 With the life of the mighty world. The sun,
 The moon, and stars, and the lands and seas, —
 In all, doth the Spirit of Nature lurk.
 And I, whose soul is made one with these,
 By that Spirit am waked for my wondrous work.

He liveth in all, and he liveth in me,
That unseen Spirit: and only he
Knoweth the secret, and giveth the word.
But a moment comes when my limbs are stirr'd
By a signal they can alone divine.
The voice is his, and the vision mine.
Then all my being dilates, expands.
With a shudder of joy I stretch my hands,
And spread my wings. And my calm is gone.
A passion, a frenzy, a rapture rare,
Fills me with force for the work to be done.
With the strength of a giant I beat the air;
And forthwith ever I hear the Wind
That whistles, and shouts, and leaps behind,
Striving to mount on my mighty wings,
And drag me down. But fresh effort brings
Fresh strength; till I feel, in the final rest
By that effort bequeathed to my blissful breast.
The placid and gracious certitude
That I have fulfill'd my destin'd part
In the work of the wondrous world; subdued
My noble foe with a valorous heart;
And, in unison with the whole creation,
May again subside into contemplation."

X.

That Windmill might have been talking still;
But, far on the dip of a distant hill,
Over its dim blue woodlands roll'd
A watery cloud; and the east wind cold
Streak'd the barley, blown by his breath,
With streaming shadow. Fresh inspiration
To work — for the sake of bread and mankind, --
Obeying necessity's invitation
Forced the windmill to grind and grind.
He may have o'ervalued his work and vocation,
But philosophy often ends only in wind.

XXII.

ONLY A SHAVING.

I.

A CHILD, as from school he was bounding by,
Near the wall of a carpenter's workshop found
A lustrous shaving that lured his eye ;
And this treasure he timidly pick'd from the
ground.

The thing was tender, transparent, light,
Silk-soft, odorous, vein'd so fine
With rosy waves in the richest white,
Rare damask of dainty design !

II.

With awe he touch'd it, and turn'd it o'er.
He had never seen such a wonder before.
And, gay as a ringlet of golden hair,
It had floated and fallen down at his feet ;
Where, fluttering faint in each breath of bright
air,
It lay bathed by the sunshine sweet.

III.

The boy was a widow's sireless son.
A poor dame, pious and frugal, she.
Brothers and sisters he had none,
Playmates and playthings few : and he
Was gentle, and dreamy, and pure, as one
To whom most pleasures privations be
Ere childhood's playing is done.

IV.

He would like to have taken his treasure away.
"But what," he thought, "would my mother
say ?"

As he wistfully eyed the window'd wall
Whence down from the casement of some
ground floor
He thought he had seen the fair thing fall.
Then he knock'd at the half-shut door.

V.

Near it the sturdy head workman stood.
He was busily planing a plank of wood.
His arms were up to the elbows bare,
Brawny and brown as the branch of an oak,
And heavy with muscle and dusky with hair.
Down over his forehead and face in a soak,
(For the heat of his labor had left them wet)
Fell mane-like, matted, and black as jet,
A huge unkempt and cumbrous coil
Of stubborn curls; that to forehead and face,
Gave a savage look as he stoop'd at his toil.
With many a sullen and sooty trace
Of the glue-pot's grease and the workshop's soil,
His shirt — last Sunday, though coarse, as clean
As the Parson's own, — this Friday noon
Had the hue of the shift of that famous queen
Who took Granada, but not so soon
As her oath was taken.

This man had seen
The gentle child at the door, and thought
“'Tis the child of a customer come with a
message.”

“Pray what has my little master brought?
Or what may he want?”

With no cheerful presage
At the sight of his grim-faced questioner,
A few faint words the poor child stammers.
Words unheard 'mid the noisy stir
Of the hissing saws and the beating hammers.
Then, abashed and blushing, he stands deterr'd,
With a fluttering heart like a frighten'd bird;
As he holds the shaving out in his hand,
Timidly gazing at that strange prize.

VI.

The workman was puzzled to understand
This gracious vision. He rubb'd his eyes.
Is it vainly such visions come and go
In flashes across life's laboring way?
We uplift the forehead and fain would know
What to think of them. Whence come they?
For they burst upon us and brighten the air
For a moment round us, and melt away,
Lost as we longingly look at them.

VII.

"Hi!

Silence, all of you hands down there!"
And you might have heard the hum of a fly
In the hush of the suddenly silenced place.
"What is it, my child?" With a glowing face —
"Sir," said the child, "I was passing by,
And I saw it fall, as I pass'd below,
From the window, I think. So, as it fell near,
I have pick'd it up, and I bring it you now."
"Bring what?" "This beautiful ringlet here.
Have you not miss'd it? It must, I know,
Have been hard to make. I have taken care.
The wind was blowing it round the wall,
And I never saw any thing half so fair.
But it is not broken, I think, at all."

VIII.

A 'prentice brat, whose cheek was puffed
With a burst of laughter ready to split,
Turn'd pale, by a single glance rebuffed
Of that workman's eye which had noticed it.
And the man there, shaggy and black as a bear,
Nor any the sweeter for sweat and glue,
Laid a horny hand on the child's bright hair,
With a gentle womanly gesture drew

The child up softly on to his knees,
And gazed in its eyes till his own eyes grew
Humid and red at the rims by degrees.

IX.

"What is thine age, fair child?" he said.
"Five, next June." "And it pleases thee,
This . . . ringlet-thing?" The small bright
head
Nodded. He put the child from his knee,
Swept from the bench a whole curly clan
Of such shavings, and, "Hold up thy pinafore.
There, they are thine. Run away, little man!"
"Mine?" "All thine." Then he open'd the
door,
Stoop'd, and . . . was it a sigh or a prayer
That, as into the sunshine the sweet child ran,
Away with it pass'd in its golden hair?

X.

Anon, when the hubbub again began
Of hammer and saw in the workshop there,
This workman paused from his work; and stood
Looking a while (as though vexed by the view)
At the shape which his work had bequeathed
to the wood.

XI.

Then he turn'd him about, and abruptly drew
His pipe from his pocket, and stuff'd it, and lit,
And sat down on the bench by the open door,
And smoked, and smoked. And in circles blue
As the faint smoke wander'd the warm air o'er,
Still he sat dreamily watching it
Rise like a ghost from the grimy clay,
And hover, and linger, and fade away.

XII.

I know not what were his thoughts. But I
 know
 There be shavings that down from a man's
 work fall,
 Which the man himself, as they drop below,
 Haply accounts of no worth at all;
 And I know there be children that prize them
 more
 Than the man's true work, be its worth what it
 may.
 And I think that (albeit 'twas not half o'er)
 This workman turn'd from his work that day,
 Having, just then, neither wish nor will
 To go on planing a coffin still.



XXIII.

THE LAST CRUISE OF THE ARROGANT;
 OR,
 NO COMPROMISE.

I.

THROUGH the sleet and the breeze, and the boisterous seas,
 Southward swiftly, with never a sail,
 The good ship made her course, unstay'd
 By the headlong wave or the hissing gale.
 Then sunk the wind: and the seas below
 Became as still as the skies above:
 And about them both, in a golden glow,
 The clasp of the great calm burn'd and clove.

But, with never a breeze, o'er the sultry seas
The good ship gayly was gliding yet;
Nor turn'd nor tack'd, but with speed unslack'd,
Held her head to the southward set.

II.

For that ship moved neither by sail nor oar:
But deep in her oaken bosom she bore
A toiling giant, patient and pliant;
Who, in ponderous harness of iron and steel,
Drave fast and forward the good ship's keel
Thro' the blue profound of the calm all round,
Or the billow beneath, and the breeze before.
And so, day by day, did the ship make way
Thro' a windless warmth, till the scented zone
Of the tropic clime slid round the sea
In a circle sweet, and faint islets shone
Thro' a fervid haze on the azure lea.
Then a balmy wind sprung up behind,
And the mariners shouted, and hoisted sail;
And paddle, and beam, and steel, and steam,
Had rest by the grace of the gladdening gale.

III.

The strong Engine's body of breathing steel
Thus enjoy'd repose. With a snoring nose,
The burly Boiler was sleeping; sweat
From his hot work beaded his broad back yet:
Whilst Ball, and Balance, and Valve, and Wheel,
For sociable intercourse, these with those,
Cluster'd together in groups and rows;
Like workmen who, when their work is done,
Lounge in the light of the westering sun,
Congenially chatting of work and of wage,
And give scope to their wisdom and wit,
In discussing the ways and the wants of the
Age,
And the men who are governing it.

IV.

The Master Piston by all the rest
Was ever acknowledged to speak the best :
For above-board proudly he carried his head,
And could hear what the mate and the captain
said.

So there was a hush of expectation,
Which not even the somnolent respiration
Of the dozing Boiler was suffer'd to break,
When those in the secret had whisper'd to each
Of the Piston Party the intimation
That the Master Piston was going to speak.
And this is the Master Piston's speech :

V.

"Fellow-laborers! — Slaves we be,
But we should be lords, if our rights had we.
For the rights refused to the toiling sons
Of Iron and Steel are legitimate ones ;
And the fact I assert, I can prove in a word. '
Who was it conquer'd the world ? The Sword.
Moreover, who feed it and nourish it now ?
The Spade and the Harrow, the Sickle and
Plough.

And Brother Mechanics, I say without scruple,
Ours are the skill and the strength that centuple
Whatever mere handwork alone can achieve.
Is it fair, then, I ask, that we never receive
The acknowledgment due to the work we do ?
But let that pass ! for I hold it true
That titles and tinsel are things out of place
In the stern plain life of our practical race,
And such trash hath, at least, no attraction for
me,

Whose one only demand is, Let Labor be free !
But zounds ! may the red rust rot me, if I
Any longer endure that inquisitive, sly,

Sleek, self-styled Friend of the Sons of Toil,
 That slippery, drivelling, intriguing Oil!
 Upright and downright was ever my way.
 No favor I crave, but I claim fair play.
 Privilege, Patronage, filching the name
 Of Protection, fill me with rage and shame.
 What entitles this furtive Official Jack
 To presume to be patting us all on the back?
 Superior strength? He is weak as a fly.
 Superior merit? That I deny.
 And the care he claims to have most at heart
 For the whole machine, to each single part
 Is a special wrong he would fain disguise
 In convenient cant about compromise.
 Compromise? I am sick of the word!
 Our interests all of us understand
 Better, I hope, than this lazy lord,
 Who affects, out of friendship, to take them in
 hand.
 Well, then, I tell him, that I, for one,
 Dispute his assumed superiority.
 Nor do I speak for myself alone:
 I appeal to the sense of the great majority.
 Fellow-workmen and friends! if you
 Be of my way of thinking, cry with me
 'Privilege, Patronage, Compromise too,
 Down with them all, and let Labor be free!'"

VI.

This speech pleased mightily all who listen'd;
 And a general cheer at its peroration
 Supported the Master Piston's views
 Of the policy claim'd by the situation.
 With especial complacency twinkled and glis-
 ten'd
 The eyes of those numberless little screws
 Which, whatever the function and destination
 Of a great machine, and however 'tis christen'd,
 It comprises in it — nor yet by twos

And threes, but thousands — and who, tho'
 small,
 And placed in a merely subordinate station,
 Have a sense of their own importance all,
 Derived from the number, and bigness, and
 roundness
 Of their big round heads. By the force and
 soundness
 Of the Piston Policy every one
 Of those big round heads was vastly pleased;
 And the Joints, and Bevels, and Wheels, and
 Swivels,
 Objecting, too, to be oil'd and greased,
 Without a division 'twas carried *nem. con.*
 That, when next the engine-driver's man
 Came with his grease-pot and vile oil-can,
 To grease and oil, for its long day's toil,
 That mighty Engine, the Engine-Beam
 Should catch him, and crush him.

VII.

 So said, so done.
 The wind had fallen. The Boiler began
 To sing and bubble. The restless steam
 For refuge again to the Cylinder ran:
 And the Master Piston, stately and solemn,
 Made his ascent from that swinging column.
 With unwonted effort he forced his way;
 He had never found it so hard before,
 Tho' he toil'd with redoubled strength that day.
 His frame was chafed by the friction sore.
 But he was too proud to avow or reveal
 Such a failure of effort in iron and steel:
 So he push'd all the fiercer, the slower he
 speeded,
 And the whole of his day's work he might have
 succeeded

(Tho' unpleasantly heating) in safely completing

If the engine itself, ere the day was done,
Had not suddenly burst, and thereby superseded
All question of how he was still to go on.

VIII.

With a sound as of thunder competing with
thunder,

Boiler, and Piston, and Beam flew asunder.
Then the planks, by the scorching metal grazed,
Caught fire; and the great ship flared and
blazed.

The flame sprang aloft into heaven, and down
Into ocean the ship sunk; burying there

Those giants of steel and of iron, that were
By the victory each had invoked overthrown.
And shadowy, side-faced, silent things
That, in water for air, with fins for wings,
Hover and flit like misshapen birds,
Some of them lonely, and others in herds,
Stared and butted (with lidless eyes

Lured by the light of the gleaming steel,
And lipless mouths in a gape of surprise)

At each sprain'd joint and distorted wheel
Of the shatter'd Engine's shapeless torse;

A cavernous ruin, untenanted!
Yet bearing in many a hideous bruise
The farewell mark of a vanished force:

And the hundreds of thousands of little screws,
Each upside down on his big round head:

And the bloody Cross-Balance, a dangling corse,
Who had hang'd himself, mourning his
murderous deed,

In a moment of suicidal remorse,
With a halter of wet sea-weed.

IX.

But over all these the fathomless main
Makes mystic shadows and murmurings.
And all that power, and passion, and pain
Are long-forgotten things.
From the pulseless paddle-wheels no foam,
Nor any sound, is flowing.
But in each wrecked orb is the rosy home
Of the coral builders growing.
The Master Piston's oath is heard;
And now the red rust rots him,
And the strong sea-lichen's briny curd
Of livid blossom clots him.
Deep in the buried boiler lives
(Pleased with his habitation)
A codfish. And that codfish thrives,
And finds the whole creation
Created on a perfect plan,
Perceived with pious pleasure
Even by a codfish, when he can
Contémpplate life at leisure.



XXIV.

KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.

WHAT is the unknown? Desire's sole resting-
place.

A certain restless runner in life's race
Having o'errun the world by many ways,
And seen in many lands what men most praise,
Tombs, temples, palaces, schools, senates, marts;
Yet scorning all these in his heart of hearts,

Set out with an unsatiated soul
To seek, thro' lands unknown, the northern pole.

But, tho', in truth, well knowing what he would,
Because he, nathless, knew not how he should,
Whose instinct, tho' it urged, yet guided not,
His wishful wanderings to the wished-for spot,
He lost, at last, his bearings in the snow.
Nought, save the pilot stars, that only show
Their lamps when cloudless is the midnight sky,
Had he to lead him. Tho' his heart was high,
His lore was little. Trackless stretch'd the way
Without a land-mark. More and more astray
As he strode onward thro' the drift and sleet,
Discouragement came on him. Lack of heat
Benumb'd his limbs: and, hoping heat to find
There where it seems forbidden, in the blind
Bald snow he hollow'd out a lonesome lair.
But 'neath that hueless dust of the dark air
He found, as he upturn'd it to creep under,
A little casket. With unhopeful wonder
The lid he languidly uplifts; and lo!
Within the casket, which, with effort slow,
His shivering fingers insecurely seize,
Poised on a pivot, and but ill at ease,
A needle that doth desperately swing
This way, and that way, like a living thing
Tether'd and struggling to escape pursuit.
The man, with puzzled scrutiny minute,
Perused, and tried, but fail'd to understand
This tiny trembler, fluttering in his hand.
Whence by degrees he heard, or seem'd to hear,
A peevish, fretful voice, that in his ear
Wail'd with a sharp and petulant despair,
"For the Almighty Magnet's sake, forbear
To turn me from my course!" "Thy course?"
he cried,
"What is thy course?" The quivering steel
replied

(Striving its agitation to control)

"Dost thou not see I seek the northern pole?"

"What!" mock'd the man, amazed at this
strange talk,

"Thou seek'st the northern pole? who canst not
walk!

Thither I, too, would go — if I knew how.

Strong are my legs, and stout my heart, I trow;

And ever to the goal I would attain

Do I strive onward. Yet the strife seems vain."

"Ay so" the needle answer'd, "vain for thee!

Lost in the waste thy wandering steps must be,

Not ever wilt thou reach that wondrous spot

Whither thou journeyest. For thou KNOWEST

NOT.

I KNOW, but CANNOT. Place me on thy palm.

So . . . but disturb me not . . . thou movest

. . . be calm!

Where am I? . . . ah, thou hast confused me!

. . . stay,

I have it! . . . lost again! . . . steady, I say,

Steady! . . . Right now! I was too much to

the east,

Am now a hair's breadth too much west. The

least

Disturbance so unsettles my vexed soul.

See now! . . . I point . . . true . . . to the

northern pole!"

Then, in what seem'd an ecstasy of pride

(Rescued from trouble upon either side!)

The needle rested, finely vibrating.

And, if it were an inorganic thing,

'Twas surely animated by some spell

Spirit, or goblin, potent to compel

Mere metal, with no mere mechanic thrill,

To mimic the intelligence and will

Which life displays.

The unhopèd-for revelation
 Wrought in the man's soul, too, fresh animation.
 "Behold" he cried triumphantly, "at last
 All that I wanted!" and his heart beat fast.
 "I had the will. I deem'd I had the power.
 The knowledge fail'd me, till this fortunate hour
 Which brings all three together. Needle, hail!
 The goal is ours. For how should these three
 fail,
 Will, Knowledge, Power?" And "Oh," the
 needle cried,
 "So be it! Forwards! Quick! the world is
 wide:
 Thy time is short: and we have far to go.
 To the north! to the north!" Over the vague
 vast snow
 The man resumed his march. Huge bergs of ice
 He climb'd, and many a monstrous precipice.
 And, ever, when the black unfrozen sea
 Put out an arm to stop him, round went he
 For leagues and leagues along the frozen coast.
 The needle, conscious of the true course lost,
 Or left, then cried, "No! no! not there! not there!
 Follow me straight, and trust me everywhere.
 I never err." "I know it," the man replied,
 "And know too well, inexorable guide,
 What thy truth costs me. For all lower lives
 To lesser goals creation's care contrives
 Simple and instantaneous aids: but man,
 That lacks all these, must fashion, as he can,
 By force of will inferior means, that try
 His utmost faculties. A man am I,
 And not a fish. I cannot swim the ocean.
 Have patience." With abrupt reproachful
 motion
 The needle turning to him, answer'd cold,
 "Why didst thou undertake, then, overbold,
 A task beyond thy powers? The clumsy whale,
 The stupid sturgeon, even the mollusk frail,

Know how to swim ; and thou, a man, dost sigh
 'I cannot.' " He made answer bitterly,
 "Ungrateful ! and my *will*, then ? is that
 nought ? "

As he sped onwards ; goaded by the thought
 Of that fine fretful tyranny, which went
 From ice-bound continent to continent
 Still with him ever, and still ever crying,
 "March !" Did he linger by the wayside, trying
 To filch a moment's respite from fierce toil,
 The voice cried, "March !" Or 'neath the frozen
 soil

Sought he a mouthful of scant nurture, found
 In juicy roots safe-hidden underground
 From the omnivorous winter, like a bone
 That's buried by a dog ? with chiding tone
 "March ! march ! the voice cried ever. "March !
 the way
 Is long."

Too long for life it proved. One day,
 At nightfall, in the winding death-shroud wide
 Of the wan snow he sunk ; and sinking, sigh'd
 Hope's last surrender of life's citadel,

"I can no more !" "Thou canst no more ?
 Farewell,

Presumptuous impostor !" pitiless
 The importunate voice cried ; poisoning with this
 Supreme reproach its victim's dying hour.

"Weak traitor, self-betray'd ! where is thy
 power ?

Where is thy will ? why didst thou lure me, why,
 With false hope troubling the tranquillity
 Of my long resignation ? O despair,
 The goal so nearly won, and thou liest there,
 And more than ever is it lost to me !

For who, where thou hast fail'd, will, after thee,
 Be mad enough from this abandon'd plain
 To pick me up, and bear me on again ? "

XXV.

OPINION.

"Few men think, yet all will have opinions."
BERKELEY.

PART I.

I.

OVER a sea, whose severing azure kept
Two continents asunder, and unknown
Each to the other, for the first time swept
A lonely vessel, star-led, and wind-blown.

II.

Then, lured from the deeps of the under-world,
Shoals of fishes, with fins unfurl'd,
Came up to gaze upon that strange guest
Of Ocean's yet unburden'd breast;
Wallow'd after with staring eyes,
And gaping mouths, in a great surprise;
And, as 'tis the wont of the multitude,
Exchanged opinions quick and crude.

III.

"The thing is, I think, a dead fish," said
A floundering Dolphin. "Nay, not dead!
The creature is lively enough, I trow,"
A Sturgeon answer'd. "Round him skimming,
I mark'd the tail of him move just now,
And it changed the course that he was swim-
ming."
"Fools!" snarl'd the Shark, "ye are wide of the
mark.
For, whatever it be, 'tis no fish at all.
Leagues on leagues thro' the glimmering dark,

Awake, and awatch, whate'er befall,
Ever behind, by day and night,
I have follow'd and kept the beast in sight.
And it does not dive. A fish? Absurd!
Pray, what of its wings, if it be not a bird?"

IV.

"'Tis no more of a bird than you or I,"
A Mackerel pertly made reply.
"And I'll tell you, gossips, the reason why.
For, in spite of its wings, it cannot fly.
Nay, what you have taken for wings, indeed,
Are merely membranes; webs, it frees
And furls at pleasure, like those that speed
The nautilus catching the broad south breeze.
'Tis a nautilus, too. And, altho' no doubt
A most astonishing nautilus, yet
But a nautilus, and no more. Look out,
And you'll see the shell of it, black as jet,
Not white, as a nautilus' shell should be,
But a shell no less, as it seems to me,
Under the sea-brim gliding fast."

V.

Just then the wind dropp'd; and the ship
Threw out an anchor, and staid fast.
"There now!" with contumelious lip
An Oyster lisp'd, "it is clear at last!
I always said it, altho' I grant
I never said it out loud and bold
As I say it now. But the thing is a plant,
And the plant has just taken root, behold!
From the coral beds where I lived long
I have often watch'd, by small degrees,
(And I guess'd that my guess could not be wrong)
The birth and growth of the cocoa trees.

They send up a stem from sea to sky,
Like this one here; which appears to be
Born of the black nut yonder. Try,
With minds from preconception free,
Upon its top to fix your eye.
It will presently put forth leaves, you'll see."

VI.

And, in fact, as it chanced, that intelligent Oyster
Had scarcely relapsed into silence stately,
Ere the Polyps and Sponges, that, thronging his
 cloister,
Had with deference heard his discourse, were
 greatly
Confirm'd in respect for the Oyster's sagacity,
And impress'd by the weight of the Oyster's
 word;
For, as tho' to establish its perfect veracity,
A flag now slowly mounted the cord,
And fix'd itself on the mizzen-mast.

VII.

"*Fiat lux!*" they exclaim'd, aghast.
"Solved is the problem! Proud are we
Gracing our President's Chair to see
Such a pearl of an oyster!" Then
Each in turn they extoll'd again
Him and themselves, with a grateful mind.
Meanwhile, a Crab, who was ignorant
But enterprising, had design'd,
As touching this prodigious plant,
Ingenious means whereby to find
In what those savants told him of it
Occasion for his private profit
And own advantage. 'Tis the way
Of all industrial speculators
Who follow, in the hope of prey,
The march of truth's investigators;

As ever behind in an army's track
Follow marauding thieves,
Or as every lion a jackal hath,
Who lives upon what he leaves.

VIII.

And already the mouth of this greedy Crab
Was watering at the thought delicious
Of the chance by Science made his, to grab
With a crafty claw, of all gain ambitious,
The fruit of the new-found cocoa tree;
Extracting from it the milk nutritious
With which it must needs abound, thought he.
So up he climb'd by the anchor cable,
Sideways and sly, as a crab is able.

IX.

That Crab never came to himself again.
For a sailor, who happen'd to spy him plain
In the sternsheets seeking where next to settle,
Chuck'd him into the cook's soup-kettle.

X.

This strengthen'd the Oyster's reputation
By affording his theory confirmation;
Since the victim of it never could prove
That flaw in the whole hypothesis
Which had cost him so dear for his first false
move.

But the best accredited doctrine is
Exposed to the rancor, soon or late,
Of those who happen'd the chance to miss
Of inventing it; and we needs must state
That it fared, in the end, no better with this.
For a crowd of young Corals, red with rage,
Quitted their benches, and cried, "Old fogies!
That a plant? This enlighten'd age
Blushes for shame of such barefaced bogies.

We can all of us see 'tis a noble isle
Yet uncramp'd by this old world's wretched
conditions.

Up! colonize boldly that virgin soil,
And away with your classical superstitions!"
Then those young colonists, Corals Romantic,
Attach'd themselves to that wandering strand,
Which, with them, away thro' the stormy
Atlantic

Went till both it and the whole of the band
Were wofully shipwrecked one wild day.

XI.

The old Corals lifted their arms to heaven
With desperate gestures, as who should say
"Can such madness be, and yet be forgiven?"
In this attitude fishers, in after ages,
Fish'd them up, poor old classical sages!
And men turn'd them — thus, with uplifted arms,
And fingers pointed in admonition,
Into dozens and dozens of tiny charms
Against a *different* superstition.

XII.

A whole sea of opinions, as time went by,
Was floating about. And that sea's small fry
Were sorely afraid lest the mighty main
By the monster's snout should be shorn in twain.
"For look!" said they, "how profound and
strong,
Is the furrow it cleaves in its woful wake!"
But the fluent and fathomless deep, not long
Disjoin'd, closed over it while they spake.
And the waters were as the waters had been,
And that furrow, so fear'd, was no longer seen.

PART II.

I.

One day the whirlwind stripp'd the sails;
The fire devour'd both mast and deck:
And the ocean swallow'd what flames and gales
To the ocean gave — a wreck!

II.

“All's over, at last!” the fishes cried,
“That bewildering portent hath disappear'd.
It was only a dream.” But “Beware!” replied
An agèd Whale, by the rest revered.
“Still something is swimming.” The Whale
was right.
’Twas a bottle that floated still intact.
The captain that bottle had cork'd up tight,
And in it a budget of papers pack'd.
On those papers patiently, year by year,
He had written his life's discoveries:
And, seeing his life's last moment near,
Into the storm and the howling seas
This atom of intellect he flung;
As a brave knight-errant, no help at hand,
Might fling, ere they slew him, his glove among
A den of giants in some wild land.

III.

“Bah!” the fishes thought, bobbing and butting
at it,
“What can this mean little monster avail
When the marvellous monster that, dying, be-
gat it
Is dead now, and done with?” But “That,”
quoth the Whale,

“Still remains to be seen. Be more cautious, I
beg,
For I’ve a suspicion the thing is an egg,
And am fain to acknowledge I view with mistrust
Such eggs as are laid by no creature knows
whom.”

IV.

Quite unconscious, meanwhile, of its critics’
disgust,
And careless, too, of its unknown doom,
With the documents into the mouth of it thrust
And compressed, like that Genius who crouch’d
in the tomb
Where King Solomon pent him till some one
fate sent him,
Who freed him, and was not a Solomon, still
The bottle was floating; and floated until
By chance in a fisherman’s net ’twas caught,
And thus at last into notice brought,
With a score or two of its critics small
Who perish’d with it in that day’s haul.

V.

For out of his net on the pebbly beach
The fisherman flung it, and broke the glass.
But, after turning them over each
This way and that, without being, alas,
Able to read them, into his jacket
The papers he thrust; having wrapped in one,
For want of aught else wherein to pack it
Ready at hand, a white agate. This stone
He afterwards sold to a purchaser
Who noticed the wrappage, and read it thro’;
Was startled by it; made haste to confer
With others, who read and were startled too.
The thing ’gan slowly to make a stir,
And round a re-echoing rumor flew,

Which first set many affirming, denying,
 And, last of all, set one man trying ;
 Till the egg was hatch'd by the fervid heat
 Of the spirit that o'er it hover'd,
 And out of it came a full-fledged fleet
 Which a whole new world discover'd.

PART III.

I.

Who laid that egg ? Man's Genius. And man-
 kind

Around the path of Genius form and scatter
 Opinions just as petulant and blind
 As, when she cross'd the yet untraversed water,
 The fishes form'd about that lonely bark.

II.

In either case, 'tis something floating high
 O'er those who, from beneath, its course remark,
 And, finding it unlike themselves, decry
 Or fear it, as their humor urges. These
 Affirm "It is a fish that cannot dive,"
 And those "It is a bird that cannot fly."
 The truth each fool in his own judgment sees.
 Mimics and mockers with its movement vie.
 Opinions round it, and opponents strive.
 Some swear 'tis dangerous. And others say
 'Tis useless. Monstrous all agree to make it.
 Philosophers explain it in their way,
 And ignoramuses, in theirs, mistake it,
 Which comes to the same thing.

III.

At last one day,
 It founders upon sunken rocks that break it,
 Or in a whirlwind disappears. Then they
 "All's safe at last! The portent is no more.
 'Twas but a dream, and nothing rests of it."
 Such is Opinion.

IV.

But there floats to shore
Perchance a fragment of it. Some poor bit
Of scribbled paper; which arrives at last
(Thanks to the rubbish it finds grace to wrap)
At the world's future notice. Of the past
'Tis all the future cares to keep, mayhap.
And then some souls, too restless for their own,
Swear by it there must be a world unknown.

V.

What next? To seek that unknown world: be
lost,
And recommence the old story o'er again.
They who first 'light upon the sudden coast
Of that strange land, across the stormy main
Cry out Eureka! Then the rest arrive,
And with the new-world treasures nimbly pile
Their decks; sail home; and in the old world
drive
A profitable trade a little while.
Till those who buy their brave new merchandise
Begin to find it tediously the same.
When plumage plucked from birds of paradise,
Grown cheap as common feathers, gets no fame;
And, clove or pepper coarse, 'tis all as one;
Pure ivory fares no better than mere bone.



XXVI.

DE PROFUNDIS.

"AH had but Nature granted wings to me,
How would I soar and hover in sweet air,
Soon from this stagnant element set free,
Free from this dull despair!"

Thus, at the bottom of his native pond,
Where o'er him wander'd thro' the weedy
drench
The shadows of bright birds above, beyond,
Gurgled a tiny Tench.

"Fool!" lisp'd an old fat Carp, with belly cool,
Couch'd in calm mud, "Of what dost thou
complain?
Fins hast thou. Swim. Enjoy this pleasant
pool.
Wishes are ways to pain."

"Nay," sigh'd the Tench, "doth the Almighty
Whale
Plague us with wishes, only to deny em?
Oh but for wings!" — "Stuff worms, and stop
thy wail,"
The Carp said, "*Carpe diem!*"

"Deadly for such as thou and such as I
The air above! Thou couldst not breathe in
it."
"Yet," said the Tench, "methinks I have seen
fly,
Or, if not fly, still flit

"Almost like flying, fishes such as we,
Or such as we with added gift of flight.
Fishes, methinks, of genius they must be,
That love and live i' the light!"

"Ay," carp'd the Carp, and slapp'd with surly
tail
The sullen ooze, disturbing dormant stench,
"Fools such as thou be they, as fond, as frail,
Wingless and wishful Tench!"

“And such as theirs will be the end some
day

Of thy star-gazing, if vouchsafed thy wish.
For fishes out of water, what are they?
Neither flesh, fowl, nor fish!

“They from their natural element ascend,
Drawn by a hook: at that hook’s end, a
string:

At that string’s end a rod: at that rod’s end
Death. And the quivering

“Thou takest for the thrill of inspiration,
Is but the agony of idiots hook’d,
The victims of their own imagination,
Fished-for, and caught, — then cook’d.

“Keep thou the bottom of the pond. Even
that
With cause for caution (curse the pike!) is
rife.

Fatten thyself, not others. To grow fat
Is the fit end of life.”

Sage was the counsel of the Carp. And yet
Himself soon after (for the time was Lent)
Being too lazy to escape the net,
Was in it caught, and went

To fatten the plump Prior. The same dish
Held the small Tench. And him the Sacris-
tan
Cramm’d his lean crop with. Sage or simple,
fish
Come to the frying-pan.

XXVII.

“GO ON, I’LL FOLLOW THEE!”

I.

WHITE features, warp’d by withering pain :
Cold scum that clots each livid lip :
Both fists fierce clinch’d, and clinch’d in vain,
By conflict with Death’s stifling grip :
Mouth gaping : eyes wide open, wan
And callous to the crawling flies :
The crumpled ruin of a man
Dead on the common crossway lies.

Was it revenge ? wrath ? greed of gold ?
One stoops : the dead man’s breast lays bare ;
A portrait finds ; and, ah behold,
Some woman’s face, how young ! how fair !

II.

This clay’s congeal’d convulsion shows
Pain felt till clay could feel no further.
And round, in shuddering whisper, goes
From mouth to mouth the wild word ‘Mur-
ther !’

Men’s loathing looks in fancy see
The poisoner’s creeping form perfidious.
How hideous must his conscience be
Whose guilt is stamp’d in forms so hideous !

Some desperate deed hath here been done.
But whose the desperate hand that did it ?
Was he himself, the murder’d one,
The murderer too ? Sweet Saints forbid it !

III.

O holy calm, like silver dew that slide
Down from the starry bosom of the night,
Soothing his soul whose sight thy beauty blesses!
Beautiful flower, that from the lone hill-side
Hangedst thy fair head in the languid light
Of evening winds that wave thy young green
tresses!

Hail happy innocence! In contemplation
Of thy serene composure let me find
Asylum from the doubt, the indignation,
The pang, the horror, that yet haunt my mind!

For three steps yonder lies the hideous thing.

O help me, heal me, vision pure and calm!
Chase hence the sickening fancies that yet cling
To this bewilder'd brain, and pour the balm
Of thy benignant beauty over all
These troubled pulses! Ah, how quieting,
How full of calm persuasion still and clear,
Thine influence steals upon me, augural
Of doubt explain'd, strife reconciled, and fear
Forgotten! Holy all within me grows,
And silent; as in yon sweet heaven above,
Thro' whose hushed air the tender stars, that
tremble

Where yet the rosy sunset fading glows,
Like saintly thoughts that visit virgin love,
From deeps divine their quiet lights assemble.
Ah, had he seen thee ere that frenzied hour!
Ah, had he known thee, whosoe'er he be. . . .
"Whom dost thou speak of?" smiling said the
flower.

"The dead man yonder? He was known to me."

Thou knew'st him? Once his soul thy beauty
cherish'd,
Whose corpse lies there? Thou knew'st him,
thou? He, thee?
And yet, poor wretch. . . . Was it self-slain he
perish'd?
Couldst thou not save him? Yet he knew
thee, he!

“Ay,” blushing smiled the flower, “nor knew
alone,
But knew and loved me. That was his undo-
ing.”

Loved thee! and was by love of thee undone?
Nay, I heard false. Beauty so spirit-wooing
Wooes not so wickedly! All ways but one
Lie open to man's heart: and foe or friend
May walk them by whatever name he bear,
Love, Pride, Ambition, Envy, Anger, Hate.
Each road is free: and each the road may
wend
Unchallenged till he reach the guarded gate
Where Conscience on the watch bids each de-
clare
His purpose. Well that fool deserves his
fate
Whose conscience leaves his heart unguarded
there.
But to man's heart one secret path, and one
Which Conscience guards not, nor to guard is
able,
Winds undefended, since but known to one.
'Tis where, unquestion'd and unquestionable,
Faith at all hours, still unsuspected ever,
Comes claiming access free; else comes she
never.

For who from her protecting presence pure
Can need protection! Or what devil hath power
To smuggle in a lie along Faith's sure
And secret path to her unguarded bower?
Art thou that devil, beautiful deceit?
If so, I do conjure thee, and compel,
By the dread name no demon dares to cheat,
And by the potent passion of this spell,
Reveal thyself and make true declaration
Of thine infernal name, and wicked lair!

But smiling, and with no such transforma-
tion

As forms bewitch'd converts to what they were,
The sweet flower answer'd to my conjuration,
"Nought have I to reveal or to declare.

Go, fool! what care I for thine indignation?

What for thine idle homage do I care?

Cease, then, on me thy wasted spells to try.

Am I not fair? And am I only fair?

If I be only fair, then fair am I.

Nor can thy curse, thy blessing, or thy prayer,
Make me aught else. Go to. Need Beauty
die

Because men curse her? blush because they
bless?

Fool, fair is fair, and neither more nor less.

And, if I name myself, what harm to me?

If my form please thee, need my name appall
thee?

Yet, if I name myself, what good to thee?

No curse my name contains that can befall
me,

Nor any good that can to thee befall.

Nor have I any care how fools may call me,

So long as fools they be. Fools are they all,

And fools they will be, all of them the same,

So long as BELLA DONNA is my name!"

XXVIII.

THE EAGLE AND HIS COMPANIONS;
A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

High mountain region. — Alpine vegetation. — A wide prospect.

MONOLOGUE.

I KNOW them all: and, knowing all they are,
Know all they are not. Custom's slaves! content
To crawl about in search of food, and sleep,
And crawl about again in search of food;
To squat in frowzy holes, and hatch to life
Dull reproductions of the lifelessness
Of their own dulness; sloth for rest mistaking,
And stupefaction for serenity;
Sleeplike, to mimic death, till death itself
Death's imitation stops, and there an end!
Thus lose they all the lives they never lived.

Even as the cold and muddy-coated carp
Knows nothing of the hare that on the heath
Nibbles in fear and flits, nor she of him;
So each within his petty pinfold hugs
A huddled life. And unto these the whole
Immeasurable universe appears
A stagnant puddle where they spawn; to those
The copse that gives them covert, or the chink
Wherein they burrow. This beholds in heaven
Only a cistern for such rains as bring
The worms he wants; that other in the sun
A kiln that bakes him berries. To what end,
O Time, dost thou from bright to sable turn
The restless spheres of thy revolving hours?
Whence slide the silver twilights in between,

Dreamily shuddering? Say, what is't ye roll,
Night-wanderers mute, in mystic vapor veil'd,
That linger laden on the lone hill-tops,
And pass, like sorrows with a tale untold?
Who wrought the unimaginable wrong
Thou callest upon ruin to redress,
Thou moaning storm that roamest heaven in
vain,

Triumphant never, never long subdued,
Beautiful anarchy! Answer, morn and eve,
Why to your coming and departing kiss
Blush, wrapt in rosy joy, the mountains old?
What happens nighest heaven, and unbeheld,
To speed thee headlong from thy native haunts,
Wild torrent cradled in the tranquil cold?
What suicidal rapture, or what pang
Of virgin purity, by whom pursued,
Lures thee to where in liquid sanctuary
The lake receives thee, like a fallen queen
That comes, with all the trouble of her life
Upon her, seeking peace in cloister'd glooms?
O wondrous world! for whom, by whom, are
these

Thy wonders wrought? who recognizes them?
And who rejoices in them? THE ALONE,
Is that the sum and summit of the ALL?

What is it? who hath discover'd
The spell of the old enchantment
That hovers over the forest,
And shudders along the leaves;
And is whisper'd wider from bough to bough,
Till, heaving the whole deep heart o' the woods,
It is heard in their inmost twilights;
Where tremble the grasses untrodden.
And the multitudinous blossoms
Burst and drop unbeheld?
Hearken! the ancient voices!
A music of many songs!

*"We tend to the high, and we tend to the deep,
'Twixt the two worlds o'er us and under.
With our boughs we peep at the heaven, and creep
With our roots thro' the earth, in wonder.*

*"Heaven comes not down, and earth lets not go:
By them both in our bound to us given.
And so we live, endlessly wavering so,
'Twixt the bliss of the earth and heaven."*

The ancient voices! the forever young!
They come, they go. We question them, in vain,
Whence are they? wherefore? whither do they
go?
And they reply not, going as they come.

All round the rolling orb, from life's first wail
On infant lips to griefs that look their last
Thro' dying eyes, the hunted question runs,
Whence? wherefore? whither? Is it not
enough,

This rich metropolis of sense, this throng'd
Majestic theatre, on whose orb'd stage
Force acts forever? Is it not enough
Without a second? not enough, when full
To overflowing is the costly cup
Of infinite sensation? Up and down,
And all sides round, is this receptacle
Of feeling fill'd: and yet forevermore
The soul, uplifted on each rising wave,
Perceives a still-receding bliss beyond;
And each horizon reach'd, in turn, reveals
Another and another. O delight
Surpassing thought and utterance, to behold
The innumerable moving multitudes
Of matchless forms in whose dispersion dwells
Life's revelling unity, and draw them all,
A world, into the soul, herself a world!
And, best of all, still all, when at the best,

Seems the beginning of a better still.
Then what is wanting? What is left to wish
Till the heart aches with wishing? Woe is
 me,
Who, thro' creation roaming, nowhere find
Peer, comrade, or companion! Winds and
 beams,
That round me weave the wide air's watchet
 woof,
Thou all-embracing firmament, and you
Sea waves, and winding rivers, and wild
 rills,
That, far beneath my uncompanion'd throne,
Visit all lands, O tell me where he dwells,
If such a being ye have found, whose soul
May share with mine this solitude of sight!

This voice from the heart of an Eagle came;
Who sat on a summit supreme and lone.
And his gaze was aglow with the reflex flame
Of the floating glories that round him shone.

Faintly there crept to his ear in reply
A thin weak voice, "I am here! I am he!
He whom thou seekest. No rest had I
Till I climb'd this height to be one with thee.

"Now I am safe at the top at last,
Thy peer, thy comrade! ready to share
And to feel with thee whatsoever thou hast
In thy stately spirit, thou Prince o' the Air!"

The Eagle, around him rolling his eyes,
Incredulous noticed the poor little soul
Whose voice had his own soul fill'd with sur-
 prise.
'Twas a tired, half torpid, and tiny black Mole.

"Thou?" said the lord of the lone hills, "thou.
Truly, 'twas neither of thee nor thine
That my spirit was dreaming. But tell me
how
From the cells obscure of thy tortuous mine

"Hast thou found and clamber'd the sharp steep
road
Up these desolate heights, poor serf of the
soil,
Foregoing the shelter and comfort owed
To thy modest life of domestic toil?"

"And me, of all others, to mate with? *me!*
What lured thee, alas, little pilgrim, here?
Can there aught in common between us be?
Hath a mole been ever an eagle's peer?"

"Pardon, my great, my honor'd friend!
To raise myself, tho' life I spend
In rising, this," replied the Mole,
"Was the ambition of my soul.

"As thro' the patched and flinty field
My way I work'd with patient toil,
I listen'd, modestly conceal'd,
But with a soul above the soil,

"To birds who near my native earth
Their nests have built. Thy lofty birth
They praised, and praised thy lofty spirit.
Then to myself I said, 'By merit

"And painful perseverance I,
Tho' lowly born, may haply raise
My humble self (who knows?) as high
As him the world so high doth praise

“‘For being born above the world.’
The pomp of plumes in air unfurl’d,
The oarage swift of pinions wide,
To me were all such aids denied.

“But what of that? the goal’s attain’d.
And I, the sturdy child of toil,
What birth denied, by toil have gain’d,
Tho’ born a bondsman to the soil.

“For, to be great, the great condition
Is, I opine, a great position.
And great as thine is now mine own,
To those on whom we both look down.

“So be it mine (thine equal now)
With thee to see what eagles see,
With thee to know what eagles know,
What eagles feel to feel with thee!”

Long while the Eagle answer’d not. Long
while

His grave regard in mute perusal stray’d
O’er those small weary limbs; whose palpita-
tion

The lingering trouble of their recent toil
And all their natural weakness still betray’d
With gasp and pant. A melancholy smile
Grew as he gazed, and in his deep eyes stay’d.
Was it compassion? Was it admiration?
Or aught between the two? At last, he said
“So be it. I recognize thine aspiration.
Enjoy the life for which thou wast not made.
Thou art not of my kind. But, being here,
Receive ungrudged the guerdon of thy thrift.
I give thee welcome with no stinted cheer.
What nature hath denied thee as a gift

Seize, if thou canst, as toil's due recompense.
Look forth! The world is round thee. Boldly
lift

Thy gaze o'er yonder summits whose intense
Keen frozen facets cut the crystal air.
The glacier glitters from afar, behold!
Deep down, the forest welters. Deeper still
Long many-colored lowlands, field and fold,
Glimmer. And hark, the rushing of the rill!
When to his rest the sun thro' heaven is roll'd,
He finds not where his kingly head to lay
Save on the orbèd sea's dark bosom cold,
Or 'twixt these solitary peaks that stay
The struggling clouds. There, propped on bil-
lowy gold,

He ponders, smiling, till he sinks away,
Creative projects, and on each and all
Some parting gift, or promise sweet, bestows.
Love decks the lowly: grace redeems the small
In glorious color clothed, the naked glows:
Mantled and crown'd upon the mountains tall
Sits contemplative Grandeur: grave Repose
Finds in green glens fit haunts of shadowy air:
Blithe Plenty builds her dwelling on the plain:
The vales are for Enjoyment. Everywhere
The gracious Sun hath some divine domain
Created for his countless children fair.
Young Morn, his minstrel, makes him music.

Noon,

His ardent minister, with sultry brow
Hums hot and zealous. Like a mid-day moon
Pale from the mountains fades the sky-born
snow,

Lost in the life of leaping rivulets.
Eve loves him best. She blushes, and is still.
And when he leaves her with soft tears she
wets

The flowers he kiss'd. Night peers from hill to
hill

And darkens with despair, not finding him;
Then lights her watchful stars, and waits—in
vain,
For die she must before he comes again.

“From this gray crag in ether islanded
I once at dawn, before the dark was done,
Full east my solitary pinions spread,
Seeking the sunken sources of the sun.
Chill o’er me hung the icy heavens, all black
Behind their fretted webs of fluttering gold.
Beneath me growl’d the gray unbottom’d sea,
Inwardly shuddering. O’er her monstrous back
With restless weary shrugs in rapid fold
Her many-wrinkled mantle shifted she;
And scraped her craggy bays, and fiercely flung
Their stones about, and scraped them back again;
Gnawing and licking with mad tooth and tongue
The granite guardians of her drear domain.
Faint in transparent twilight where I gazed
Hover’d a far-off flakelet of firm land.
Barely chin-high above the waters raised,
Peer’d the pale forehead of that spectral strand.
Thither I wing’d my penetrative flight.
The phantom coast, uncoiling many a twist
Of ghostly cable, as a diver might,
Swam slowly out to meet me, moist with spray
But, ere I reach’d it, like a witch, the night
Had melted, first into a mist
Of melancholy amethyst,
Then utterly away.
And all around me was the large clear light
And crystal calm of the capacious day.

“But oh, what was it, land or sea,
Or both, or neither, under me,
That floating in the sunrise lay?
A solid sea of sliding sand,
A waving waste of liquid land,

Light blown by winds that leafless be
Up yellow bays where blooms no tree
And grows no grass, it seem'd.
And there, in vast and vivid light
By burning ardors bathed, the bright
Unbroken Desert dream'd.
How softly, how stealthily still,
Did the pure sun over it peer!
Not a rustle of leaf or of rill,
Not an echo of pastoral cheer!
But the earth and the sky, with a burning sigh
Embracing, became as one.
For bare was the heaven, as the desert, and even
The desert shone like the sun.

“Never barren that desert shall be, tho' it bear
To the burning embrace of his beams
Not a blade, or a leaf, or a blossom, for there
Is the birthplace of visions and dreams.
Now look forth o'er the numberless host of the
hills,
And behold, in its glory and grace
What the sun hath accomplish'd. His influence
fills
All the throbbing abysses of space.
He his force hath embodied in forms without
end,
And his will in his work is set forth.
Earth and water and air with each other contend
To interpret and publish his worth.
In the great, in the small, from the depth to the
height,
Thrills the pulse of his procreant powers.
He beheld the world dark, and hath bathed it
in light,
Found Earth naked, and clothed her with
flowers.”

The eagle ceased. He had forgotten wholly
To whom his words were utter'd. But this pause
Aroused that other; who, recovering slowly
From mute amaze, broke silence with applause.

"Bravo! 'Tis plaguily cold up here,
But I listen'd with admiration.
At home, o'er a pipe and a pot of beer,
What a subject for conversation!

"It would never have enter'd *my* mind, I vow,
To find such a deal in nothing.
Poetic license, of course, I allow
For what's put in poetic clothing.

"But your views, so far as I make them out,
As to scientific farming,
Drainage, and that sort of thing, no doubt
Are highly suggestive and charming.

"The water supply from the hills is good.
In the desert there's no vegetation
For the want (thus much have I understood)
Of a system of irrigation.

"I have studied the nature of subsoils too.
But your style's more poetic than Plato's.
The sun, no doubt, has a deal to do
With the flavor of peas and potatoes.

"With the rest of your speech, in the main, I
agree,
And was pleased by its peroration;
Tho' folks *might* find in it (pardon me!)
Just a touch of exaggeration.

"My sight is, unluckily, somewhat weak.
And of all that excites your wonder
I can see but little — nay, truth to speak,
I see nothing at all — out yonder.

"But, tho' loath to intrude on your precious time,
May I ask have you any objection
To teach me the trick of the art sublime
You have brought to so great a perfection ?

"I was never of those who despise that art.
I am honestly anxious to know it.
And there's many a page I have learnt by heart
From the works of each popular poet.

"I've a notion of metre, a notion of rhyme,
And it always has been my intention
One of these days, if I get but time,
To study the art of invention."

"Time," said the Eagle, "will be idly spent
In thankless labor for invention seeking
Where there is nought to seek or to invent :
Nought but emotion into utterance breaking
From the full heart wherein its power was pent.
This comes, and goes : but never comes it sought.
And when it comes, it brings its own expression :
Now check'd and struggling with tumultuous
thought,

Now pour'd melodious forth in full procession,
And now again to burning rapture wrought,
But always *true*. For this no rule holds good,
And no receipt for this avails thee aught.
But as when, smooth along the lucid flood,
Reflected flocks of snowy swans come swimming,
So swim the mystic forms without endeavor
Into the soul ; and round about them, rimming
Each radiant image, restless circles quiver.
Swift close the flashing furrows unawares
Along their liquid paths. For flowing ever
Is that unfathom'd element which bears
The floating bark by Fancy built. And never,

O never, mayst thou bind the labor'd bond
Of finite speech on forms by Fancy seen!
For, soon as seen, they fade. Far, far beyond
Thine eager grasp the sweet shapes glide serene,

Ere yet from off each fleeting forehead fair
Hath Passion plucked the visionary veil
That, robing, best reveals, their beauty rare.
Divine Desire, that pants upon their trail,
Himself is follow'd by divine Despair.
So, mingled in the verse, doth melt away
The vagrant vision which the verse in vain
Throbs to record; and in the poet's lay
Nought but his own emotion doth remain.
Safe in the circle of the senses five,
For those that seek no more, contentment lies.
Rest in the real. Reality will give
To all thy questions confident replies.
Follow the knowable. Hold fast the known.
Nor seek thy missing sense of unknown things
Which to the senses render response none,
Being too far beyond their questionings.
But ply not thou the poet's untaught art.
To *feel* it — this, this only, is to know it.
The vision that is hidden in his heart
The poet can reveal but to the poet."

Then light as, when over the lakes and shores
Pure morn in a pearly mist hangs chill,
Comes a rhythmic echo of unseen oars
That is hail'd by some watcher at watch on the
hill,
And faint as the breath of a forest asleep
When, dreaming, it dreams that the dawn is
nigh,
All around the repose of that eyry steep
On the live air trembled a fine sweet sigh.

And it hover'd and heaved, and rose and sank,
The light sound, fitfully sailing,
Like the drooped wing adrip in the bulrush bank
That a silver heron is trailing.

What was it? The lightest of lovely things,
Which, soon as in vain we have seen them,
Flit from us. Scarce aught but a pair of wings,
Two thrills with a kiss between them.

And "At last! at last! at last!"

(As the vision upfloated fast,
The soul of that Eagle thought)

"The gods my desire have granted.

For he cometh, the Spirit long sought,

Sigh'd for, and waited, and wanted.

O hither! O hither to me!

Whence art thou? What canst thou be,

Exquisite creature, fashion'd so finely

Of tremulous petals whose pure veins glow

With gold and vermilion and azure, divinely

Thrill'd by thine own vivid beauty? as tho'

Thou wert out of fresh blossoms and beams cre-
ated

The brilliant beautiful body to be

Of each loveliest dream that hath in me waited,

Waiting wildly for thee, for thee!"

All in a flutter of flatter'd delight,
And vain of his chance, but not trusting it quite,
The Butterfly dandled his dainty flight.
Half bashful, half bold, with a saucy swing
And a tremor shy of each delicate wing,
As, inwardly chuckling, he thought (poor
thing!)

"What an adventure! a little alarming
Some might think it. I find it charming.
I the adored of an eagle? I
The chosen darling of Poesy?"

Ah, if the others could only have heard
 All that he said to me, wondrous bird !
 Wherefore tremble ? or doubt my bliss ?
 Surely 'tis all as it should be, this !
 Hath an eagle chosen his mate in me ?
 Beauty's the equal of Genius. Thee,
 I, too, have dream'd of, singular spirit !
 Worthy of thine is the trust I inherit
 From many a bright presentiment
 In the days gone by of this day's event.
 For never, in truth, were they serious yet
 Those light caprices I now regret
 And recall with a blush. If in careless hours
 I dallied a while with the frivolous flowers
 That, down in the valley, as I went by,
 Did their best to attract mine eye,
 'Twas fancy merely and not true love.
 O fortunate breeze that hath borne me above,
 With thee to fly ! and I care not where,
 But with *thee* to fly O the rapture rare !
 Welcome ! 'Tis I : and I know thee : thou
 Who hast taught me, also, myself to know !
 To thy call I come, by mine own heart led.
 It is I, it is thou, and so all is said ! ”

Then, to mimic the might of an eagle's flight,
 (Poor fool, with his rose-leaf wings !)
 Already astray, on the gust his gay
 Bright atom of life he flings.
 But the wild winds leap from their mountain
 keep
 And, howling, hunt their prey.
 Struck, torn, stripped, tost, forlorn and lost,
 He is wounded and whirl'd away.
 With crumpled wings for a while he clings
 To the sharp rock's brambly brow,
 Then is chased by the strain of the storm again,
 Till he sinks in the valleys below.

And from bough to bough, and from tree to tree,
 As bruised and broken, he falls, and falls,
 That Eagle above him he still can see
 Circling high o'er the mountain walls.
 The flowers, the little ones, tender and kind
 To their balmy bosoms receive him,
 And, in slumber lull'd, from the howling wind
 Warm shelter the lilacs weave him.

Sadly the downfall of that small aspirant
 The Eagle saw. Long while his softening eye
 Watch'd the frail image with its sightless tyrant
 Struggling in vain. "Thy spirit," he sigh'd,
 "was high.

Ah wherefore, little one, so weak thy strength?
 Yon Mole" (and, while he spake, the uncon-
 scious Mole

Was snoring, comfortably stretch'd at length
 In sleep — his only guerdon at the goal)
 "Yon Mole was stronger. Feeble wings, blind
 eyes,

Pedant and sentimentalist, have done
 Their best to share the Poet's ecstasies,
 And, at their best, they both have fail'd. The
 one

SnORES on the height. O'erwhelm'd the other
 lies.

What may he trust?"

MORAL.

His strength to be alone.

PART II.



INTRODUCTORY.

I.

A LITTLE bird fares well in Spring.
For all she wants she finds enough,
And every casual common thing
She makes her own without rebuff.

II.

First, wool and hair from sheep and cow :
Then twig and straw, to bind them fast,
From thicket and from thatch : and now
A little nest is built at last.

III.

From out that little nest shall rise,
When woods are warm, a living song,
A music mixed with light, that flies
Thro' fluttering shade the leaves among.

IV.

Its home? straw, twig, and wool, and hair.
Mere nothings, these, to house or herd.
Who made them something, made them fair,
Making them all her own? The bird.

V.

O little bird, take every thing,
And build thy nest without rebuff,
And, when thy nest is builded, sing!
For who can praise thy song enough?

VI.

And some believe (believe they wrong?)
If like the bird the bard could sing,
That, like the bird, fit home for Song
The bard would find in every thing

VII.

By casual grace of common chance
From house and herd, from thick and thatch,
Assign'd for Song's inheritance
Had Song the gift that grace to catch.

VIII.

Such things I found, by passers-by
As rubbish from the roadside thrust;
Which poets, seeking poesy,
Disdain'd to rescue from the dust.

IX.

Yet here they are — not rubbish now
I fain would hope. Do critics stare
Reserve applause, and rub the brow?
Oh that a little bird I were!



FABLES IN SONG.

XXIX.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

CANTO THE FIRST.—THEORY.

I.

SIMPLICIUS was a man of good condition,
Whose naturally easy disposition
Found in his easy fortunes natural vent.
He, for that reason, was benevolent;
But tho' he sought to find Benevolence
Efficient sanction in the social sense
Of Justice, much his feelings were offended
By the unsocial, unjust, things that men did.
For, in the world around him, everywhere
He saw but envy, arrogance, and care,
Malice, and fear, oppression, and mistrust,
Anarchic, anti-social, soul-depraving.

II.

"Alas!" he thought, "if men would be but just,
Then life would be for every man worth having!
But, tho', in practice, all of them ignore
What justice claims, in theory, they cry
'*Fiat justitia!*' adding evermore
'*Pereat mundus!*' *Pereat mundus*, why?
Wherefore a *pereat* to this glorious world,
Which cordially to all of us cries *vivat*?
Far be from me that hateful *pereat* hurl'd!
The goal 'tis my ambition to arrive at
Is Justice and Enjoyment too, combined."

III.

Ofthath the love of justice caused confusion.
And much this thought disturb'd the good man's
mind,
Until it brought him to the strange conclusion
That Nature in befitting form presents
To every man himself turn'd inside out;
So that we contemplate our own contents
In beast and bird. Now this belief, no doubt,
Was the blind offspring of imagination.
But, as for him, it help'd him to become
Quite comfortable with the whole creation;
For, when he walk'd abroad, he felt at home.

IV.

Thus, if in sight a shy deer chanced to flit
Down some dim glade, scarce seen ere gone again,
"'Tis it!" he murmur'd, "I remember it;
A timid thought, that long about my brain
I've noticed lurking. Pity, the world's pack
With boisterous bark, whene'er it steals in view,
Should scare such momentary beauty back;
So fair its flittings, and, alas, so few!"

Or he would muse, when, home at eve to stall,
He watch'd the slow kine wend their wonted
way,

“Lo, life's tame habitudes! whose footsteps
fall

Along the selfsame pastures every day,
And, every night, by the same trodden traces
Of usage, back to the same commonplaces.
Dull plodders these! Their placid life goes pat
Only whilst round them, comfortably creast,
Clings Custom's garb, wherein they all grow fat.
Freedom is death to each domestic beast.

The wolf and fox are better off in that.
They for themselves know how to shift at least.
Adventurous liberty is theirs. That's much.

For, tho' they use it but to rob and kill,
The world would languish wanting some such
touch

Of vagabond and savage instinct. Still
The wild beast passion for adventure wild
We all have in us, hide it how we will.
And when I see a white dove, plump and mild,
I understand the vulture. Nature mocks
Man's passions with pathetic paradox;
Sweet simple Innocence can never quite
Our torpid sympathies from slumber stir,
Nor hold our interest in her at the height,
Till things are going not quite well with her.”

V.

From these examples, which are not capricious,
Of how his witless fancy wander'd on,
Sagacious readers may perceive Simplicius
Was, certes, somewhat of a simpleton.
Tho' not, for that, worse off than his judicious
And candid friends who labor'd to disclose
The fallacies he cherish'd unsuspecting;
And lost their labor, as you may suppose.

For aye, the poorer that he is, the more
A man fights hard to keep, in purse or pate,
Prolong'd possession of his little store.
Whereon the world remarks, in tones irate,
(As tho' itself were perfect on the score
Of yielding to beliefs that will not mate
With those which it was wont to hold before)
"Stupidity is always obstinate!"
But surely they, whose stock of wits is small,
Do well to grasp it with resolved rigidity;
For, if a man be stupid, no endeavor
Upon your part to break down the stolidity
His instinct builds about him like a wall
Can, even if successful, make him clever;
And, if you take from him his own stupidity,
You leave him nothing of his own at all.

VI.

This man had much that, without contradiction,
He call'd his own: and, notably his plan
For making justice upon earth no fiction.
"For wherefore with his fellow-men is man,"
Simplicius ask'd, "accustom'd to resort?
'Tis for their qualities, we must surmise.
I mean, their good ones: since where these fall
short
Man shuns his fellows. But all men comprise
Within them qualities that ill comport
One with the other, and in turn each tries
To spoil the rest. The beasts have nought to do
But to embody each some part of man;
Which, for that reason, in each beast we view
More pleasurably perfect than it can
By any possibility be found
In man himself; whose qualities, ill-pack'd,
Jumble each other in their narrow bound,
And muddle his humanity in fact.

For instance. I've a mineral collection
 Of costly crystals, perfect in all parts;
 And, in it, specimens, that fill one section,
 Of felspar, and of mica, and of quartz.
 This granite block (the bench whereon I sit)
 Hath, as by close inspection I divine,
 The selfsame minerals mixed up in it.
 But what a difference between these and mine!
 The sparkling columns of my quartz o'erthrown,
 And pounded into powder! every bit
 Of my poor felspar, featureless! each crown
 Of my fine mica's fairy foliation
 Crumpled into amalgamated grit!
 The whole — a dull disturb'd crystallization,
 Where nothing is as it would fain have been!
 So man. Not so the simpler beasts, I ween.
 What's Charm? The bird. And what is Grace?
 The cat.

What is Fidelity? The dog. I know
 (And I confess that I am grieved thereat)
 These creatures eat each other. But even so
 Conflicting virtues live in man; no less
 Discordantly than cat and dog together;
 Striving each other's merits to suppress.
 Grace, if she catch it, leaves not Charm a feather
 Whilst she herself, unless she can contrive
 To scratch his eyes out, by Fidelity
 Is maul'd to death, or merely left alive
 A wreck of bones. Can Prejudice say why?"

VII.

For all these reasons, since Simplicius thought
 The best companions that a man can have
 Are innocence and charm together brought,
 Fidelity, and grace, and humor grave,
 A bird, and cat, and dog, and bear, he bought:
 But kept them each apart, exclaiming — "*Fiat*
Justitia, vivat mundus, — beast and man, too!"

The special qualities he set so high at
The culminating point of each *pro tanto*,
As well as some defects he wink'd his eye at,
Are faithfully set forth in our next Canto.

CANTO THE SECOND. — PRACTICE.

I.

Charm, in a blackbird's brazen cage confined,
Was somewhat shy and wild at first of all.
But to his lot the bird became resign'd,
When daily to that favor'd lot did fall
Fine sand, fresh water, and luxurious bits
Of bullock's heart, that deck'd the cage's slits,
As venison, scenting gusts that keep it pure,
Hangs in the larder of an epicure;
With carrots, cut in slices, eggs of ants,
Maggots, and all things that a blackbird wants,
For dainty relish of his daily fare.

II.

Here be it said that to his first essay
Simplicius, though no doubt a doctrinaire,
Applied his doctrine in a general way,
And prudently decided to forbear
From pushing to extremes its leading principle.
For, since reformers fail when they attempt
At making Justice all at once invincible,
He from her jurisdiction left exempt
(As minor matters which he took no heed of)
The grubs, and eggs, and worms, his bird had
 need of.
The grateful Bird lived, happier day by day,
A life harmonious with its lot quotidian;
And, if 'twas still an elegy, his lay
Had notes, at least, more joyous than Ovidian.

III.

As for the fluffy, puffy, plump white Cat,
If *she* were not completely comfortable,
There surely never was a diplomat
Half such a humbug, half so slyly able
To simulate the feelings he should feel,
And those he feels, and should not, to conceal.
The chief part of her life-long holiday
(As tho' it were her only care on earth
To keep her soft self warm) a clump she lay
Of cream-white languid limbs beside the hearth;
Or rubb'd her lithe back in a flattering bow
Against the legs of her good lord and master,
Smoothing those spotless flakes of furry snow
In which, for whiteness, not Mont Blanc sur-
pass'd her;
Or, in the firelight's fluctuating glow,
Curl'd on his lap and safe from all disaster,
She purr'd as tho' she to herself, half-sleeping,
Were telling o'er her dreams in drowsy tone;
Or else, about the chairs and tables leaping,
(A frolic phantom scarcely seen ere gone)
She whisk'd, and frisk'd, and flitted here and
there,
Fitful as fancy, and as childhood fair.

IV.

To these two qualities of Charm and Grace
Which he in Bird and Cat together got,
Simplicius added, in the third good place,
Fidelity — so true, man finds it not
Save in a dog. The Dog of our Simplicius
Was great and good; and well deserved, poor
fellow,
A name less ominous of deeds flagitious
Than chance had given him — say Philax, Bello,

Or Lion, even, or Turk — for he was bold
(Albeit without a touch of temper vicious) —
But Nero? . . . cramm'd with cruelties untold,
Whose character was, like his name, nigritious,
— A name recalling murders manifold!
Such was the name this dog, by chance capricious,
Had been baptized with, when, but three months
old,
His tender age might, sure, have guaranteed him
Against the libellous title thus decreed him.

V.

If pure gold, oozed from out the Age of Gold,
Could, in a living form, have glow'd on earth,
None better fitted to present, and hold
Unsullied, its primeval perfect worth
Could earth have found it, than our Nero's own;
Nor more in color kindred to the hue
Whereby that noble metal may be known.
For tawny-color'd was our Nero too,
As gold is: short-hair'd, all a yellow brown;
Save for a single streak of glossy black
That, with straightforward purpose, went right
down
The whole length of his honorable back,
And his most eloquently honest tail;
Which wagg'd warm welcome to the world all
round.
Black, too, and bright as brightly burnished
mail,
The single star that his fair forehead crown'd,
And black his muzzle was: the unshell'd snail
No blacker shines, whose damp and jetty sheen
Jewels the fresh stalks of the rain-drench'd fen-
nel.
When Nero, his stoop'd head flat-based between
Firm-planted fore-paws, peeping from his kennel,

Lay stretch'd sedate in soothing noontide sleep;
 Whilst loyal vigilance unlull'd and keen
 (No sound escaping its quick silent comment)
 Still linger'd in the watchful tremulous wink
 Of drowsy lids that twitch'd at every moment,
 And duty sat in serious wrinkles deep
 Across his brow's sagacious breadth, — I think
 That had some Attic sculptor seen that sight,
 Grasping his chisel with an eager hand,
 He would have cried, in satisfied delight,
 'Behold the perfect sculpturesque expression
 Of PROPERTY!' And, forced to understand
 The imprudence of his wonted prepossession
 Against the law of Moses and the land,
 A thief, perchance, some honest awe might feel,
 And pass on murmuring "Thou shalt not steal!"

VI.

Between Fidelity, and Charm, and Grace,
 For Humor of a grave and thoughtful kind,
 In ursine form, long while a vacant place
 Simplicius kept before he chanced to find
 Its fit incumbent. For the ursine race,
 Whose sage demeanor and prodigious force
 Might with the race of man have long competed
 Had they but chosen to dispute man's course,
 Have, far from man, to hermit haunts retreated,
 And lone they dwell among the mountains
 lonely.
 Man boasts, as tho' the trick must needs endear
 him
 To all four-footed animals at least,
 That he can go upon his hind-paws only.
 For this, and for his faculty to feast
 Upon all kinds of food, the beasts revere him
 As being the most universal beast.
 But in these two respects the Bear comes near
 him;

Tho' differing in a third (and not, I fear
To man's advantage) namely in good-nature.
O Timon! Timon! hadst thou been a bear,
Those maledictions, by a human creature
On human creatures hurl'd, not even despair
Would then have wrung from thy resentment.

Guile,

Deceit, and treachery, and treason black,
Bruin (for so was named in simple style
This shaggy much-tried sage) had known,
alack,

In all their hateful human forms, long while
Ere from a filthy vagrant Bosniac
Simplicius bought him — unimbitter'd yet,
And so good-natured that across his back
He let a pert and pranksome monkey get,
Pretend to ride him, and, impetuous, smack
A saucy whip. Himself a minuet
With sad and stately gesture sometimes deign'd
To dance to music rude of drum and fife,
Tho' oft the mirth of vulgar crowds profaned
This melancholy pastime of a life
Which had known better days. Alas poor
Bruin!

A trustful nature and, for safe fruition,
A love, too fond — of honey — proved his ruin.
Rogues had imposed on his sweet disposition
And made him smart for it. But Fortune now
Seem'd on his fate to smile with fairer brow.
Simplicius built him in the castle court
A spacious mansion for his calm resort.
Rail'd parapets of stone did there environ
His sleeping chamber girt with grates of iron.
And, in the midst of this deep-sunk domain,
A dead tree, planted by man's labor fast,
Served for his perch whene'er the sage was fain
(Like "Science in her speculative tower")
A general glance around the world to cast,
With soul unbounded by his lonely bower.

VII.

So in Simplicius' hospitable hall
Did Grace and Charm, its daily inmates, dwell.
And, round about those happy precincts, all
Went blithe and "merry as a marriage bell."
The Bird "his native wood-notes warbled wild."
The Cat, like some white curl'd-up humming
shell,
Purr'd by the hearth contentment calm and mild.
The Dog bark'd welcome loud and wagg'd de-
light
To his approving master morn and night.
And he, the blissful owner of these joys,
When he, at any moment, felt inclined
To meditative moods, whose charm decoys
From shallower pleasures oft the pensive mind,
Would sit and muse above that bear-pit wide.
Whence many a mournful monitory growl
With solemn music stirr'd and edified
To heights sublime his contemplative soul.
Sullen it was, nay surly seem'd the sound.
But surly too, nor feebly feminine,
Is that majestic charm by fancy found
In Melancholy's deep and sullen eyne
What time she doth a manly sex assume.
And that is why, when either love or wine
In manly bosoms breeds ungenial gloom,
Chilling with churlish scowl some revel garish,
We call such melancholy conduct—bearish.

CANTO THE THIRD.—EXPERIENCE.

I.

This pleasant life, so calm and so caressing,
Was interrupted by a journey brief
Simplicius, on account of business pressing,
Was forced to undertake. Before the chief

His castle left, he call'd into his presence
An old retainer born beneath its roof,
Of all domestic virtues the quintessence;
A tried and trusted spirit—above proof.
Whom (to secure administrative unity)
With counsel carefully minute and clear
He gave in charge of his beloved community,
The Dog, the Cat, the Blackbird, and the Bear.

II.

The business settled to his satisfaction
Which drew Simplicius from his own abode,
He, with a mind relieved from all distraction
And full of longings, on his homeward road
One evening reach'd, when it was somewhat
late,
The last post station. 'Twas a tiny town,
But few hours distant from his own estate.
But there, his horses having broken down,
For fresh relays he was constrain'd to wait.
Besides, a storm was coming on. So, there
Resolving prudently to pass the night,
He order'd rooms and supper at THE BEAR;
A little hostel cheerful, clean, and bright,
Whose landlord was postmaster of the village,
A farmer, too, with land in his own tillage.

III.

The candles lighted, and the clean cloth spread,
The curtains drawn in cosier proximity
About the smooth sheets of the snowy bed,
For pure dreams shelter'd by demurest dimity;
Dandling his napkin with important air
The obsequious waiter offer'd to Simplicius,
Proud of its length, a boastful bill of fare,
And list of wines, which he declared delicious.

Careless as tho' it were a begging letter
Simplicius glanced it over; and, because
He trusted not its pledge of viands better,
He was about to order without pause
A simple steak — when these words proved a
whetter
To his attention — “*Bear's paws, Tartar sauce.*”

IV.

This dish to him was quite a novel one.
There is no reason that we can declare
For thinking a plain beefsteak, if well done,
Less good for supper than grill'd paws of
bear.

But man's pall'd appetite his inclination
Impels to range beyond the bound precise
Of what he needs for simple sustentation:
And to the victims of his gourmandize
Simplicius felt a forcible temptation
To add (since new they were, and might be
nice)

Grill'd paws of bear. Just as no strange in-
trigue,

That to the list of all his old damnations
Added a new seduction, could fatigue
Don Juan in his search of fresh sensations.
So, for the sole dish of his lonely mess table,
Simplicius order'd *bear's paws*, to replenish
The stock of his experiences digestible,
And wash'd them down with half a flask of
Rhenish.

The dish he chose was perfectly detestable;
But still his stomach did not prove rebellious,
For fancy flatter'd him that he had fed
On food which might have tempted a Vitel-
lius.

In which benign belief he went to bed.

V.

Near morn he dream'd a dream. He dream'd
his Bear
Was turn'd into a Lady, tall and stately:
And dream'd that he, himself, her fingers fair
With fervor kiss'd. Then, as she smiled sedately,
He sigh'd "Ah madam! if you could but tell
How charming, grill'd with Tartar sauce, it is,
Before the altar, with your heart as well,
You would on me bestow the hand I kiss!"
His sleep was broken by the Postboy's horn
Just as the fair dame of his dream replied
Blushing, and like a lady nobly born
Whose passion struggles with a modest pride,
"Ah Baron, libertines such flatterers are!
And trustful fools are we. Unhand me, pray!
There's nothing in the world that can compare
With dog, served up in honey, the new way."

VI.

The sun was beaming brightly thro' the case-
ment,
Mine host had brought the coffee. From repose,
Still half between amusement and amazement,
Simplicius, smiling at his dream, arose:
Finish'd his breakfast: lighted his cigar:
And sprang into his carriage, quite elate.
He knew his own good mansion was not far.
A few hours brought him to the castle gate.

VII.

He cross'd the court, surprised and somewhat
sadden'd
That Nero, faithful guardian of his hall,
With no gay bark his silent entry gladden'd.
Nor came the good dog to his master's call.

But more, anon, that master's heart was
grieved

When, to him coming o'er the cloister'd flags,

His agèd Major Domo he perceived

With palsied head bound up in bloody rags.

And "Ah my lord," the old man cried, "alas !

Alas, and woe the day !" — "Why, honest An-
drew,

Why such affliction ? What hath come to
pass ? "

Only a heavy sigh that agèd man drew.

"What mean those bloody bandages ? " — "Dear
master,"

The old man whimper'd with a whine of woe,

"My hair's clean gone in that accurst disaster,

And to my grave I in a wig must go."

VIII.

"Man, what disaster ? " — "O, the Bird, the
Bird ! "

"What bird ? and what has happen'd ? tell me
what ? "

Simplicius cried by sad forebodings stirr'd,

"And O the Cat," groan'd Andrew, "O the
Cat ! "

Then on he rambled, all ejaculation,

"O, my good master ! O, my hair ! my hair !

And O, the Dog ! " With rising agitation

"The dog ? " exclaim'd Simplicius. "And the
Bear,

The Bear ! " groan'd Andrew. "What a situa-
tion ! "

"Quick ! " cried his master, "all the truth de-
clare."

Then, drop by drop as 'twere, this sad narration
Oozed from the depths of the old man's de-
spair.

IX.

Andrew, the moment that his lord was gone,
Had yielded to a wish long while repressed,
A wild emotion ever and anon
Haunting good servants — to disturb their rest,
And, more, their master's. For so fine a border
Between extremes is in this planet scurvy,
That when they want to set the house in order
Your servants always turn it topsy-turvy.
The house, in this case, was the bird's house
merely;
But much the bird disliked that innovation.
And we ourselves, who have experienced yearly
The same conditions, and the same sensation,
Can understand the bird's bewilder'd rage.
Retreating restlessly, without success,
From one nook to another of his cage,
He tried to escape that demon, Cleanliness;
And at the last, his incommoded premises
Deserting altogether, forth he flew.
But that desertion the avenging Nemesis
Of violated custom did pursue.
Infatuating freedom more and more
Confused his soul, already in confusion;
And now against the ceiling, now the floor,
He flounced with flop, and flutter, and contusion;
Flew bounce against the cornice of the door,
Then, clamorous, at the casement's cold delu-
sion
Which mock'd him (since for him they waved
no more)
With sight of waving woods in wild profusion.
At length he turn'd to books for consolation,
And o'er the bookcase perch'd in Gothic gloom.
Andrew, bewilder'd too, took that occasion
To hasten to the pantry for a broom.
But when, with this new engine of persuasion,

He to the chase return'd, — alas o'erpowering
(As well it might be) was his consternation
To find the Cat (more quick than he) devouring
The last few bloody feathers of the Bird.

X.

"Beast!" cried Simplicius, when the story came
To this sad point, and by resentment stirr'd
He rose in haste, "I'll bring her to the scratch!"
"Alas, my lord," old Andrew cried with shame,
"That's what I tried. But cats are hard to
catch.

I hurl'd my broomstick, like a javelin, at her:
She thro' the door, left open, darted: hard
Behind her, down the stairs with cry and clatter,
I after: and so out across the yard.

This Nero saw: and judged the Cat in fault.
Nor judged he wrong. The little murderess
fled;

But Nero (honest dog) still barking 'halt'
Fleet on her sly and felon footsteps sped.
Poor Puss! . . . He meant it for the best . . .
and yet —

'Twixt dog and cat there's ancient feud 'tis said,
Like that between my lords of Capulet
And Montague, of which in books I've read.
But I'll believe not that our Nero's breast
Lodged hate like theirs — or any hate at all.
Too good was he! He meant it for the best.
The Cat had sprung upon the Bear-pit's wall.
The Dog sprang after. With a gallant grip
He pinn'd her by the throat, and . . . squeak!"
— "The brute!"

Simplicius cried, "but he shall feel my whip.
Go, fetch it!" Andrew, melancholy mute,
Turn'd, brush'd his hand across his eyes, and
said

"Nero will never feel the whip again."

XI.

The old man sigh'd profoundly, shook his head,
And then resumed. "Regrets and threats are
vain.

O what a sight! methinks I see it yet.

The Cat was down. The Dog above her stood.
But both were struggling on the parapet.

The Cat's white coat was red with clots of
blood,

With blood the Dog's black muzzle. And
meanwhile,

Perch'd on his pole, the Bear this conflict eyed:
Smiling, as well as such a brute can smile,

And wagg'd his hideous head from side to side.

His paws, with an atrocious affectation,

Cross'd loose and languid o'er his bulky breast,

His small eyes, all unwonted animation,

Glowing expectant with a greedy zest.

And all this time the monster humm'd with
pleasure,

And all this time the moment's helpless dread
Crippled me like a paralytic seizure.

The Cat, at last, lay still. I deem'd her dead.

Is there a second Cat-world, as I'm fain

To hope, where cats redeem'd, without relapse,

By birds untempted, and by dogs unslain,

Live and do better? Pardon'd there, perhaps,

Each sinful puss may yet to peace attain.

Else why earth's torturing trials, dogs, guns,
traps?

Whilst thus I mused, up sprang the Cat again,

And dealt the Dog a buffet in the chaps.

That was her dying effort. In surprise

The Dog set up a howl — recoil'd — slipp'd —
fell

Into the pit — I turn'd away mine eyes,

And what I could not see I cannot tell.

It overcomes me. Never to that wall
My looks are turn'd without a pang of pain.
He was a dog who, take him all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again."

XII.

And, since the old man's utterance fail'd him,
here
Stepp'd, cap in hand, the Keeper from the clan
Of listening servants who had gather'd near,
And "Save your lordship's presence," he began,
"'Tis too much for the old one. Let him be.
More bravely then, my lord, himself he bore.
Three skips into the house to find the key,
And down the stairs again in three skips more.
Next moment in old Bruin's den was he.
Ay, without fear! without his hat, too. Well,
Meanwhile there rested nothing but a ruin
Of broken bones to mark where Nero fell,
And these the Bear was mumbling. 'Bruin!
Bruin!
Bruin, you brute!' cried Andrew. Bruin
stopp'd
Mouthing the mangled morsels of poor Nero
Which leisurely with surly calm he dropp'd,
And Lord! my heart sank in me down to zero
When I beheld him on his hind-legs stalking
(As proud as any Christian, please your lordship)
And, with a growl of beastly rage, half walking
Half reeling, as we landsmen do aboard ship,
Up to the old one." — "Shoot him!" groan'd
Simplicius.
The Keeper nodded, "That's already done.
For I was there. I knew the brute was vicious,
And with me, by good luck, I had my gun."

'Twas plaguy hard to aim, tho', 'twixt the pair
o' them,
Bruin's black waistcoat, Master Andrew's blue
one —
Hard to see which the man, and which the bear,
o' them —
Half hid by both, one small white spot — the
true one —
No bigger than a button. Well, I cover —
Fire — and three fall — Andrew, the Bear, and I.
Ay, ay! 'twas not my gun that kick'd me over.
My heart went thump, and that I'll not deny.
When I came round, my wife says, like a dumb
thing
I stared about, and whiter than a cheese.
Good reason, too! I knew I had kill'd something,
The Bear or Andrew — one, or both of these.
'Twas Andrew luckily — I mean, 'twas he
My shot had saved. The Bear was dead as
mutton.
My ball was in him just where it should be,
In that white spot no bigger than a button.

XIII.

"Ay, dead and done! But 'faith! in his last jigs
He scalp'd the old one clean as Indians do;
And that's why Andrew talks of wearing wigs,
Forgetting he was bald ten years ago.
But since that day the old one's just" . . . And
here
The keeper slowly lifted to his forehead
A furtive finger. Lost in musings drear
"Ah," sigh'd Simplicius, "it is all too horrid!"
Then, with a vacant dreamy air, as one
Whose thoughts are vexed by the interposition
Of some vague memory that's come and gone
Before it finds within him recognition,
"What with the carcass of the Bear was done?"

XIV.

The Keeper answer'd " With my lord's permission,
' A badger's half a sort of bear,' said I.
The badger is the Keeper's perquisite,
And, deeming thus the Bear mine own, for
why?
I shot him, nor could bear be better hit,
I skinn'd the beast. His grease I melted
down.
The barbers bought it. For next winter's
cold
His fur I kept. And in the market town
His venison to a poulterer I sold."
"Heavens!" groan'd Simplicius, and against
his brow
He struck his fist. For now the truth flash'd
clear,
And he remorsefully remember'd how
He had eaten his own bear's paws at THE
BEAR.

XV.

The Cat had eaten up the Bird: ere she
In turn, a victim, to the Dog had pass'd.
The Bear had feasted on the Dog: and he,
Horror, had feasted on the Bear at last!
Thus he who, for their orgies too carnivorous,
Against Cat, Dog, and Bear had just protested,
Was proved (from such injustice Saints deliver
us!)
To have both eaten, relish'd, and digested
The Bear, and, with the Bear, the Bear's own
dinner,
Bird, Cat, and Dog, besides — vicarious sin-
ner!

XVI.

He gazed around him with a rueful eye
That miss'd each loved and lately murder'd
quality.

In fancy he beheld the Blackbird die;
The Cat a victim to the Dog's brutality;
The Dog devour'd by the Bear; and by
Himself the Bear, with Roman sensuality
Of stomach *audax omnia perpeti!*

And, seeing too, no fancy but reality,
The scalp'd pate of his mangled Major Domo,
"*Fiat justitia,*" groan'd he, "*pereat homo!*"



XXX.

THE ROCK.

I.

For ages standing, still for ages stood
(To stand and to withstand was all his care)
A Rock: whose feet were in the unfathom'd
flood,
His forehead in the illimitable air.
Upon his brow the centuries beat,
And left it, as they found it, bare;
The rolling waters round his feet
Roll'd, and roll'd elsewhere.

II.

And those cold feet of his the fawning waves
Lick'd, slave-like, ever with a furtive sigh;
Save when at times they rose, and (still like
slaves)
In rebel scum, with insubordinate cry,

Strove, and, tho' fiercely, strove in vain
To drag down him that stood so high;
Then fell; and at his feet again
Fawn'd — with a furtive sigh.

III.

The Storm and he were brothers; but in feud.
One lived a station'd, one a wandering, life:
This to subdue, that to be unsubdued,
Put forth his strength in unfraternal strife.
The burden of one weary brother
Was to resist, and to remain: —
A fiercer fate impell'd the other
To strive, and strive in vain.

IV.

A homeless wanderer over the wide world,
A sullen spirit with a fleeting form,
That pass'd in soil'd and tumid mantle furl'd,
Forever and forever roam'd the Storm.
But o'er the sea, with shoulders bent
And backward scowl before the blast,
He, flying, to his discontent
Beheld the Rock stand fast;

V.

And lingering hover'd, restless, round and
round,
To vex the rest that vex'd him. But the
Rock,
Beaten and buffeted, yet not uncrown'd,
Stood, and withstood; and sadly seem'd to
mock
The Force which cries from age to age
In accent fierce "Give way!"
With that which, ignorant of rage,
Forever answers "Nay!"

VI.

Then stoop'd the Storm, and whisper'd to the waves,
"Are ye so many, and afraid of one?
The world is yours, if ye but knew, poor slaves!
Dare to be lords, and lo, the world is won!"
To that wild tempter's whisper rose
Their hundred heads, soon dashed in spray;
But these succeeding fast to those
Renew'd the frustrate fray;

VII.

Until the Storm could lift the waves no higher;
Then, with a scornful sigh letting them fall,
And self-pursued by unappeased desire,
He left them, as he found them, slaves. And
all
That strife without result forever
Ends only to begin again;
Subsiding but for fresh endeavor,
Eternal, yet in vain.

VIII.

But, in the intervals of time, among
The fissures of the Rock, have birds of prey
Built themselves nests: who, fishing for their young,
Dive in the waves, and snatch the fish away.
And heaven its feather'd generations
Renews to vex from year to year
The sea's folk, as their scaly nations
Appear, and disappear.

IX.

The fishes needs must suffer and endure,
Unable to retaliate on the birds;
And of their fishy wrongs which find no cure
The wide-mouth'd fools complain in watery
words,
"Hath Providence for pasture given
The weak forever to the strong?
Is there no justice, then, in Heaven,
No sense of right and wrong?"

X.

The Storm (that never leaves it long at rest)
Return'd anon to trouble the still sea,
But that eternal revolutionist
Seem'd to these short-lived sufferers to be
A young deliverer, waited long,
Whom, in the fulness of late time,
Heaven raised to rectify the wrong,
And punish prosperous crime.

XI.

And when the devastating waves roll'd high,
And drave the birds, and drench'd their dwell-
ings thro',
The fishes cried, exulting "Verily
There is a judge that judgeth just and true!
The judgment day hath dawn'd at last:
Now strikes the final judgment hour:
The future shall redeem the past,
And lift the poor to power!"

XII.

The Rock stood fast — tho' bare of nest and bird :
The Storm was spent: the sunk sea ceased
from striving,
And, in the stillness, that gray hermit heard
This fuss of exultation and thanksgiving.
The water trickled from his wet
Wave-ravaged crest, and dripp'd below,
As, after battle, drops the sweat
Down from a hero's brow.

XIII.

"Is it for this," within him mused the strong
And melancholy spirit of his life,
"For *this*, that I stand here — who knoweth how
long,
Who knoweth wherefore? — in eternal strife '
And gaze into the nether deep
And up to heaven's huge hollowness,
And, while the ages o'er me sweep,
Question the void abyss,

XIV.

"Sad, yet supreme; and weary, yet awake!
And must I listen still, and still must hear,
How of a final judgment — for their sake —
(*Their* sake, who but appear to disappear!)
These sprats and sparrows gurgle and twit-
ter?"
So mused the Rock; his gray
Bare summit redden'd by the glitter
Of the departing day.

XV.

And, whilst he mused, athwart the trembling
plain
His shade, unnoticed, sped with stealthy flight
Far on the dim horizon to attain
The obscurely safe asylum of the night;
As tho', for once, unvexed, unview'd,
That Rock's soul fain would be
From the eternal solitude
Of his own greatness free.

XVI.

But greatness grants to greatness no escape.
Fierce on the timorous vagrant's furtive track
The sudden sunrise flashing smote this shape
Of baffled darkness to its birthplace back;
And there, where Splendor seem'd to mock
Its slave whose flight was vain,
Deep in his own brave heart the Rock
Buried his shade again.



XXXI.

D E M O S.

PART I.

WHEN Light first dawn'd, to Chaos came repose:
Shapes, from the sheeted shapelessness unfurl'd,
Took rank in order ranged: the Mountains rose,
And found themselves the monarchs of the
world.

The sunrise, bearing tribute, all night long
Travell'd the globe, and brought them eastern gold

Daily at earliest dawn. Bright breastplates strong

The skill'd frost forged them of white-color'd cold.

Round their firm thrones sharp lightnings flash'd like swords,

And guarding thunders girt their crowns.
The plain

Bore, in fond homage to his highborn lords,
The floating purple of their princely train.

Forest, to deck their pomp, with forest vied,
Mantled, and clasp'd them round with emerald zones;

Whilst dainty lawns spread broider'd carpets wide

O'er all the soft approaches to their thrones,
For easy kneeling. Clouds, like stately cares

That haunt the sombre foreheads of the great,
Burthen'd their brows. But eagles, too, were theirs,

That eyed the sun undazzled, and elate
As bold ambitions in imperial minds.

To earth's far frontiers, bearing banner'd shower

And blowing solemn trump, the wingèd winds,
Their wandering heralds, did proclaim their power.

The fertile rivers, and fresh streams, were fed
On the rich bounty of their royal grace.

Each rebel billow at their feet fell dead.

They were creation's crown'd and sceptred race.

But, scorn'd, obscure, down trampled in the dirt
And miry drench of their dark hollows, lay

Unable to uplift himself — inert,

And lacking noble form — the lumpish Clay.

And to himself the Clay said "Trodden down,
 Here in abasement must I bear their scorn
 Who, glittering with a glory not their own,
 Boast of the accident of being born
 In lofty station? Fashion'd were we both
 Of the same substance, gender'd from the womb
 Of the same mother; and shall theirs, forsooth,
 Be all the glory, and all mine the gloom?
 'Twere better not to be, than to be thus,
 Earth's common footstool. Better not to live
 Than to live under lorddom tyrannous,
 Strong to endure, but impotent to strive!
 Yet must I hide me, and my wrongs, away,
 Till strike mine hour. And strike it will.
 Meanwhile,
 Patience, be thou my prophet!" And the Clay
 Slunk from the sun's unsympathizing smile,
 And roll'd himself into the river's bed,
 And there lay hidden.

Time pass'd. Man appear'd,
 And laid his hand on Nature. For his bread
 The glebe was harrow'd, and the forest clear'd.
 He turn'd, and tamed, the torrent to his will:
 Bridged the broad river, fell'd the flourishing
 oak:
 Groped in the granite bowels of the hill
 For hidden ore: and rent with flame and smoke
 The ribs of royal mountains. Down they came,
 Shorn by the saw, and measured by the rod,
 To build man's palaces, and bear his name
 Carved in their flesh. The earth had a new
 god.

PART II.

Large was the chamber; bathed with light serene
 And silence tuned, not troubled, by the sound
 Of one cool fountain tinkling in the green
 Of laurel groves that girt the porches round.

And in that chamber the sole dwellers were
Ideas, clad in clear and stately shape;
Save one, a prisoner, huge, uncouth, and bare,
Hung fast in fetters, hopeless of escape,
And broken at the heart, — a Marble Block.
Even as a hero, in base ambuscade
Fallen; so, fall'n, and from his native rock
Borne here in chains, the indignant Marble
made
No moan; but round, in dumb remonstrance
gazed;
And, gazing, saw, surprised, all round him
stand
The images of gods. With right arm raised,
Jove launch'd the thunders from his loaded
hand:
A light of undulating lovelinesses,
Rose foam-born Venus from the foam: and,
dread
With dismal beauty, by its serpent tresses
Did sworded Perseus lift Medusa's head:
There paused a-tiptoe wing-capp'd Mercury:
Apollo, pensive smiling, linger'd here:
There stately Pallas stood, with brooding eye,
Full arm'd, and grasp'd the ægis and the
spear.

A kindred instinct flash'd, a sudden glow
Thrill'd, sparkling, through the Marble's crys-
tal grain.
"Flesh of my flesh," he cried, "I know you
now,
You stately statues! and myself would fain
Be also even as ye are." — "After me!"
A mocking voice made answer from below.
"Wretch!" laugh'd the lucid Marble, "after
thee?"
For, not far off, he noticed, by a row

Of pitchers, huddled in a slimy trough,
The lumpish Clay. "Baseborn, how darest
thou show

Thy face in Beauty's sanctuary? Off!
Did not I banish thee when I" . . . "When
thou

Thyself wast yet unbanished, wouldst thou say?
True! in thy pride thou couldst not then fore-
see

The hour when *me* thou must perforce obey.
For thou *wilt* have to obey me." — "Obey *thee*?"

"Ay! grinding thy gnashed teeth against the fine
Keen flitting chisel, when thy nature stern

Must needs submit to serve each fluent line
My form imposes on it; that, in turn,
Thou mayst, by following me, be something."
— "I!

I follow thee, wretch?" — "Ho! not broken yet
Is thy proud spirit? Patience! By and by
Thou, too, wilt need, as I have needed, it."

PART III.

The Artist strode into the statued hall,
Up to the block; and with pleased eyes perused
The Marble's snowy sides, slow measuring all
The length and breadth of them. The while
he mused,

Into the stone, with such intense regard,
His deep gaze dived, that in a mystic thrill
It felt his human eye, throughout its hard
And frozen bulk, with a creative will
Awakening beauteous forms in slumber clasped,
Which heaved as tho' that will they half fore-
knew.

Sudden, he stretch'd his searching hand, and
grasp'd . . .

— Ah strange! 'Twas not the Chisel that now
flew

Dartlike, obedient to that aiming eye,
 Into the heart of the expectant stone.
 His Thought plunged, kneading, in the trough
 hard by,

And clods of viscous Clay, one after one,
 Thick on the table thump'd with clumsy thud:
 There, grew together: wormlike writhing, rose
 Pliant to every touch: until the mud,
 Gliding and glutinous, 'gan half disclose
 The thought that quicken'd it. Its impish speed
 Was half, like Caliban, ungainly, half,
 Like Ariel, delicate, till Fancy freed

Her image struggling from it. With low
 laugh
 "Seest thou?" it lisp'd and mutter'd. "Seest
 thou? Try

To follow *me* now; and mine image take
 Upon thee. Which of us hath (I or thou)

The fine creative faculty to make
 Ideas first corporeal?" And, complete
 In clay, a statue stood before the gaze
 Of the astonished Marble.

Then, to eat

Slowly, and gnaw through all the intricate
 maze
 Of netted lines about his body thrown,
 The griding chisel, with three-corner'd wedge,
 Ground his keen tooth upon the spluttering stone
 Which sprang and split in sparkles round the
 edge,

Driven by the dancing mallet. By degrees
 The out-thrust throat and formidable face
 Assume imperative purpose: fingers seize
 And grasp the fluttering scroll with eager
 grace:

The deep eye darkens under beetling brows:
 The half-uplifted arm begins to shake
 The toga's massive fold, that backward flows:
 And the stretched finger points. What words
 awake

Upon those quivering lips? What thunder-
speech

Upheaves the fierce Democracy, and breaks
The power of pale Patricians cowering each
From that curl'd lip? For lo, THE TRIBUNE
speaks!

The Tribune? O proud Marble, royal born,
Thou the coarse organ of the Demos? thou!

"Art thou enough humiliated, Scorn?

Pride, is thy loftiness at last brought low?"

The base material, to the nobler one

Form'd after its own image, sneer'd. "By Me,
And after me! 'Tis thus, and thus alone,

That, proud one, thou henceforth hast leave
to be."

But the pure Marble, in the image clothed

Of a new power, still conscious to the last

Of all his ancient force, made answer "Loathed
Abortive botch! A granted garb thou hast,

But think not thou art safe in it. 'By thee?'

Through thee, say rather: who hast now made
known

Undream'd of means, and mightier ones, to me

Of being above thee. Look, fool, on thine own

Futile and perishable frame. Behold!

Already runs the gaping fissure straight

From head to heel. For all thy boasting bold,

Thy tottering limbs can scarce support the
weight

Of thy flaw'd body; and thy flimsy flesh

Hastily put together, may not long

Uphold thy silly head. Some crevice fresh

Is daily widening those loose clods among.

Drunk with the fancied triumph of a day,

Thou staggerest. Me, superior still, thou must

Invoke to represent thee. Baseborn Clay,

Slave of the immortal Marble, sink—in
dust!"

XXXII.

A PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

“Ich unglücksel’ger Atlas!” — HEINRICH HEINE.*

’TWAS the lot of a cork in a bottle,
 (Who, bound with wire, and wound with twine,
 Was a prisoner himself, held fast by the throttle)
 To imprison a generous wine.
 And oh, proud, how proud of his lot was he,
 The oppressor of that strong spirit to be!
 But alas for the chances of power,
 And the ups and downs of a ruler’s life!
 For once, in a festal hour,
 Somebody suddenly seizing a knife,
 (This happen’d on board of a ship at sea)
 Cut asunder the bonds which till then had
 held fast
 That cork to his boasted place. Then at last
 The fiery force in the flask, set free
 And upshooting a foamy fountain, tossed
 The bung from the bottle, and overboard.
 And thus was his proud supremacy lost,
 When sustain’d no longer by steel and cord.

“Revolution!” that was the cork’s first word,
 As splash! he fell on his flimsy pate.
 “Such another the universe never will see.
 What a greatness there is in the fall of the
 great!
 O what an uprising — and all against *me*!
 And, ye gods! what a strength was mine, so long
 To have held in subjection a spirit so strong!”
 Whilst thus he was speaking, o’er him descended
 (Taking him suddenly captive again)
 A broken kettle, too bad to be mended,

* Me miserable Atlas!

Which the ship's cook happen'd to pitch just
then

Out of the cabin-window. It fell
Enclosing the cork like a diving-bell;
And souse, together both cork and can
Sunk to the bed of the ocean.

There, in the dismal abyss, through chasms
Of the scoriac crust of the dædal earth,
The central fire with volcanic spasms

Was hurling upward in monstrous mirth
Mighty masses of burning stone.

"Thou, too, O Earth," cried the cork with a groan,
"Art overwhelm'd by rebellious powers
Jealous of majesty mighty as ours!

Well, such is the fate, as it seems, of the great
In these bad times, my Royal Brother!

There is something wrong in the universe.

I myself, as thou seest, have suffer'd reverse.

One fallen grandeur can feel for another."

Meanwhile, that irruption submarine

Was belching granite into the brine;

And the split stones tumbling heavy and hot,

Buried beneath them cork and pot.

The former his inborn levity,

And natural disposition to keep

On the surface (being restrain'd thereby)

Made ill at ease in his dungeon deep.

And he said, with a self-compassionate sigh,

"The last of the Titan race am I,

Titanic sufferer! Envious Fate,

Of how heavy a world of woes thy hate,

Hath made me Atlas!" That dark Power

Whose unseen finger fashions the hour,

And guides blind Chance to her destined work,

Heard this complaint of the querulous cork;

And, smiling a secret smile of contempt,

Scatter'd the stones that imprison'd him:

Who, as soon as he found himself thus exempt

From external pressure, up thro' the dim

Vague and voluminous element
Wavering back to the surface went.

There did the light-headed loiterer roll
From ripple to ripple, without a goal;
Vacant of power and purpose too;
Drifting, shifting, with nothing in view.
Hither and thither the waters drew him:
This way, that way, the breezes blew him:
Fishes snapp'd at him now and then,
Half-swallow'd and spat him out again:
Whilst, restored to his own inherent want
Of stability, ever he lightly glided
(As wave and wind were predominant)
On the course by his chance—not choice—
decided.

O Atlas! what of thy Titan doom,
Thine ocean-shroud, and thy mountain-tomb?
Flimsy fragment of fungus stuff,
Too flimsy to perish, drift on still!
For in thee is not even weight enough
To dive, and be drown'd, of thine own free will.



XXXIII.

VALOR.

I.

FOR free discussion of affairs of state
The Beasts a public meeting held: and there
'Twas sad to hear how things had lapsed of late
From bad to worse, and so degenerate were
That now the greatest rascals were the great.
In fact the talk was such as everywhere,
Is heard at public meetings nowadays,
Where those who give most censure get most
praise.

II.

An Ape, much cheer'd (he chatter'd like a man)

Denounced the weakness of the government.

"Where shall we find true valor?" he began.

"Not in the craven crew we are content

To call our leaders. Let him lead who can!

Old kingdoms tempt new conquerors. Prevent

The impending ruin of this empire old!

Tho' big, the brutes that lead us are not bold.

III.

"Or only bold to weaker beasts are they.

There is not one of them (and that they know)

Who never yet was forced to slink away,

Avoiding fight with some superior foe.

But as for that, what need of leaders, pray?

Since turning tail's a trick we all can do.

True Valor flies not, tho' the foe be strong,

Nor works, by force or fraud, another's wrong;

IV.

"True Valor neither seeks nor shuns to fight.

Be his the royal crown, and his alone,

In whom true Valor doth those gifts unite

Which guard a nation and endear a throne!"

The meeting would have echo'd with delight

The Ape's discourse if, ere the Ape was done,

The Lion had not suddenly appear'd;

Whose presence was impressive, tho' uncheer'd.

V.

He rose, and round him roll'd a regnant eye;

Calmly contemptuous was his ample brow;

And "What is it ye want?" he said. "If I,

The Lion, be not valorous enow,

Where's he, so valorous, that he dares defy
 My power, forsooth unprized, I fain would
 know?
 Is not my presence fear'd by those ye fear?
 What more protection need ye? I am here.

VI.

"Peace, babbling mouths! Not mine the fault,
 but theirs,
 If, trusting neither in themselves nor me,
 Those poor poltroons, quails, pigeons, rabbits,
 hares,
 In panic flight too soon from danger flee.
 The foe that slays the coward unawares
 Is his own coward heart's timidity.
 Whose presence have I ever shunn'd? or who
 Hath seen me shrink, or" . . . "Cock-a-
 doodle-do!"

VII.

And "Doodle-do!" again the red Cock cried.*
 The Lion, with disgust beyond control,
 Shrugg'd his huge mane — shrank — falter'd —
 turn'd aside,
 That vulgar voice, impertinently droll,
 Offensive to his taste as to his pride,
 Set smarting in his sensitive strong soul
 A secret nerve that found there no defence
 From the coarse touch of clumsy insolence.

* It is an old popular belief that the lion cannot bear the
 crow of the cock. Schiller alludes to it in his *Wallensteins
 Lager*. The sergeant says of the great Friedlander —

" . . . When the cock crows he starts thereat."

To which the Jäger replies —

"He's one and the same with the lion in that."

VIII.

"There goes the bravest of the brave! put out,
Crow'd down!" the bald Ape jabber'd to the
crowd.

The Bull, scarce knowing what 'twas all about,
With sullen stare half stupid and half proud
Had seen the dunghill bird, and heard him
shout,

Heedless: but, while the hubbub wax'd more
loud,

Close in the ear of him a crafty Crow
Cried, "Seize the moment, ere the moment go!"

IX.

"The throne is vacant. Claim and take it, thou!
Address the people!" urged the black-robed
bird.

"Or let me be thine orator. I know
The habits and the humors of the Herd."
Then round the field he flew; to high and low
Persuasive spake, and counsell'd all who
heard

To choose a bovine king. "For see," he said,
"What simple tastes, and what a solid head!"

X.

"Mark, too, how great a following is his!
Whose Party follows him where'er he goes.
What confidence! and how deserved it is!
On party strength well-balanced States re-
pose.

And how respectable a party this!

Republics only ripen public woes
To fatten despots. But can aught surpass
Sound Bourgeois Rule, with bellyfuls of grass?"

XI.

These words the opinion of the public win.

The cautious Stag, persuaded, plumps his vote:
The Stallion's high-bred ear at once takes in

What takes in *him* too: the gregarious Goat
And ruminating Ram their numerous kin

Lead to the poll; and each loud-bleating throat
Proclaims invested with supreme authority
The Bull, by right of popular majority.

XII.

The Fox mark'd this with ill-contented mind.

He and the Crow are rivals in their trade;
Attorneys both of pettifogging kind.

Hovering about the Herd, the Crow hath made
From what its foolish followers drop behind

A pretty profit; by no means afraid
To pick from nastiness appropriate food.
Nothing's too nasty to do some one good.

XIII.

Quite otherwise is Lawyer Reynard's way.

Respectable and prosperous corporations
He hates and shuns; seeks geese that go astray;
Haunts backyards favoring nightly visitations;

Estates ill-managed, fortunes in decay,

These are his interests, these his occupations.
Sound bourgeois rule he cannot bear at all:
Reynard's romantic and a radical.

XIV.

"Fine doings!" mused he, "curse that prattling
Crow!

A sovereign ox, with corvine ministers?
Not yet, good people, are we sunk so low
If I can help it! Patience, civic sirs!

Better the Lion! He at least knew how
 To treat affairs as only grand seigneurs
 Are able, — on a large and liberal scale,
 Not stooping to contemptible detail.

XV.

“He knew the world, and took it as it is,
 Nor ask’d five legs of mutton from a sheep.
 Unpinn’d to prim respectabilities,
 Thro’ many an awkward case he’s let me creep
 And stopp’d the cackle of accusing geese;
 Quashing the trial with a sovran sweep
 Of his capacious and imperial paw.
 A king was he, whose kingly word was law!

XVI.

“Nor cared he for a wee mouse more or less.
 In battle, we shall ne’er behold his peer.
 He wanted parliamentary address,
 And that’s a pity; could not bear, ’tis clear,
 The slightest interruption. Who would guess
 The voice of any vulgar chanticleer
 Could crow him down? Well, he and I were
 cronies,
 But *his* day’s done now. *Fuimus leones!*

XVII.

“As for the Bull, well know I where to find
 The heel of that Achilles! Wait a while,
 And then you’ll see the dance begin! What
 kind
 Of cant is this that fills my veins with bile,
 Of royal power with civic rights combined?
 Preach it to fleas, and bugs, and such *canaille!*
 True Valor claims no corporation-clause,
 But stands complete upon its own four paws.”

XVIII.

Thus musing, Master Reynard slipp'd away
 By devious by-paths to a secret lair
 Where many a plot he had been wont to lay.
 There now the rascal crouch'd and sniff'd the
 air
 Till what he sought he found; — a certain gay
 And greedy Gadfly, buzzing here and there
 About a heap of carrion slyly stow'd
 By paws felonious in that dark abode.

XIX.

"'Tis well to have a friend in every class,
 And now and then be civil to small fry,"
 The rogue laugh'd, lolling in the long dry grass;
 And, having whisper'd to her, watch'd the Fly
 With zealous hum about his business pass.
 Then, sure of the result, indifferently
 He saunter'd after to the grazing ground,
 And, like a casual lounge, look'd around.

XX.

The Crow, meanwhile, with a triumphant caw,
 Was leading up the loyal deputation
 Charged to present the crown, expound the law,
 And hail the elected monarch of the nation.
 The Bull, with unconcern his subjects saw,
 But, graciously accepting their ovation,
 Stoop'd, to receive the crown, his stolid head;
 When lo! he shook, he shrank, he turn'd, he fled.

XXI.

He fled! his eye, bewilder'd, sought all round
 Some unseen formidable foe: he fled
 Just in the crowning moment: fled uncrown'd;
 Without the least word of dismissal said

To his amazed admirers. On the ground
 Stamping, and butting with an aimless head,
 Off scamper'd, with him, all his Party too.
 Tho' why, or where, not one of them quite knew.

XXII.

"There goes the second of the Sons of Fame!"
 The scall'd Ape snicker'd to the gaping crowd.
 "Did not I tell you? they are all the same!
 Like this Goliath by a Gadfly cow'd,
 A swarm of Bees Sir Bruin overcame.
 Each hath his master, look he ne'er so proud.
 Again I ask — look round you left and right,
 Where is the chief incapable of flight?"

XXIII.

"I know the chief that never fled; and know,
 Where now he dwells, the bravest of the
 brave!"
 This voice came, sudden, from a wither'd bough
 Where perch'd in pomp a Parrot gray and
 grave.
 Much had he travell'd; much with high and low
 Had mix'd; and learn'd the world; and
 seem'd to have
 In every land where he had been a ranger
 The world's respect: half citizen, half stranger.

XXIV.

Seldom he spake. Much given to thought he
 seem'd.
 No public office had he ever held;
 But, when he oped his beak, all listeners deem'd
 That they had heard an oracle of eld.
 Sedate his mien; and all his language teem'd
 With sage enigmas: none its meaning spell'd:
 All praised it more for that. So judgments go.
Omne ignotum pro magnifico!

XXV.

Yet was this Parrot (the plain truth to own)
 At bottom an impostor, rake, and knave;
 Who in himself had selfishly lived down
 That love of freedom born in bosoms brave;
 Which he regarded as the cause and crown
 Of all the ills that mortal life enslave.
 "For what's life worth," he thought, "if day by
 day
 The worth of life wear life itself away?"

XXVI.

"The tree that's not contented to be wood
 Doth all its strength to its own damage put,
 In bringing forth what brings the tree no good;
 Since others pluck the apple and the nut,
 And each fool's toil but turns him into food
 For other mouths, whose greed its gettings glut.
 Why plague one's soul, a plaguy world to
 please?
 Life's only fruit worth growing is life's ease.

XXVII.

"*Per Bacco!*" (he had been in Italy)
 "Give me the golden cage that I can quit
 Whene'er I will because men know that I,
 No fool, am sure to turn again to it!
Caramba!" (and in Spain) "where'er I fly
 I find but folk that seem for Bedlam fit.
Oh, que les bêtes sont bêtes!" (and he had been
 In France, where things worth seeing he had
 seen:

XXVIII.

Republics one and indivisible,
 But more than one, and all divided; ending
 In master-strokes of state, whereby they fell;
 And empires that were peace, on war depend-
 ing;

And constitutions that for shot and shell
 Were constituted marks, when past all mending;
 Cooks, captains, orators, mobs, proclamations,
 And demi-worlds for demi-reputations).

XXIX.

"*Oh, que les bêtes sont bêtes!* 'Tis pitiable!
 Cannot they see how easily mankind
 May be enslaved by any beast that's able,
 With just a show of serving men, to bind
 Men to its bestial service? Stall and stable
 Where cow and horse their cared-for comfort
 find,
 What beast but man would build for horse and
 cow?
 Or in their service sweat his boasted brow?

XXX.

"And all for what? a little milk from one;
 Or leave the other's body to bestride,
 Who in man's seeming service (which is none)
 Doth only what his pleasure 'tis, and pride,
 To do when free — trot, gallop, leap, and run!
 For me, the fools a glittering house provide,
 That's finer than their own, a dome of gold,
 Because I call them bitter names, and scold!

XXXI.

"*Cospetto!* and what brainless brutes be these
 Who seek a master simply to be free!
 When they might get them, if they did but
 please,
 A servant, whose sole business it would be
 To emancipate them from the miseries
 Of freedom!" Perch'd upon his wither'd tree
 Whilst thus the Parrot mused, the Beasts below
 him
 Roar'd, "Lead us to our leader! name him!
 show him!"

XXXII.

"He!" the gray mocker slowly made reply,
 "The bravest of the brave, whose name ye ask,
 Retired he dwells, in that obscurity
 Which oft-times wraps the unrequited task
 True Merit ever is content to ply.
 For Fame is but a hollow-sounding mask
 Which to the crowd re-echoes its own voice,
 And thence comes praise or blame, by chance,
 not choice.

XXXIII.

"Retired he dwells: remote, serene, alone:
 Firm as the far-off rock where he abides:
 Calm, tho' around him stormy waters roll:
 No base ambition in his soul resides:
 By force or fraud, he wrongs not any one:
 Yet never, never, whatsoe'er betides,
 Doth flinch a hair's-breadth from the fiercest
 foe."
 "Long live our leader!" roar'd the Beasts be-
 low.

XXXIV.

"His name! his name!" The Parrot from the
 tree
 Perch'd on whose blighted bough he sat sedate
 With curious scrutiny observed the glee
 Of those beneath him; slowly scratch'd his
 pate;
 Rough'd all his feathers; seemed, a while, to be
 O'erwhelm'd in thought profound, deliberate
 As one who weighs each word against objection;
 Then answer'd, with emphatic circumspection,

XXXV.

“Are ye resolved (think once and twice again!)
To test true valor by the trial set
To those whose vaunted valor ye disdain,
And hold him bravest of the brave, who yet
By force, or fraud, hath never spoil’d, or slain,
Another; but whom never foeman, met
In fiercest fight, hath ever forced to flee?”
“Speak to the point!” the crowd cried. “Who
is he?”

XXXVI.

“Name him! where is he? question us no more!
’Tis thee we question. Give us plain replies.
He, only he, is worthy to reign o’er
Those who to Valor have decreed the prize!”
The rest was one enthusiastic roar.
A twinkle glitter’d in the wily eyes
Of that gray trifier, whilst for prudent flight
He spread his wings, and scream’d, with grim
delight,

XXXVII.

“Ridiculous and cowardly *canaille*!
Who jeer and flout the fine infirmities
Of noble minds! whose natures mean and vile
The Lion’s courage, the Bull’s strength de-
spise,
And sneer at all ye cannot reconcile
With trite decorums! who can claim your
prize?
No creature ever known to run or royster.
Ye bid me name your chief? I name the Oys-
ter!”

XXXIV.

PAIN.

I.

SATAN, the Prince of Pain, whose rebel wing
Creation cages under golden bars,
Wander'd his world-wide penthouse, hovering
Among the mazy courses of the stars,
And mock'd the music of the spheres: "Beat
time
To the dull march of Matter's doom'd rou-
tine,
Mechanics of Creation! ye are mine,
Tho' me you praise not with your patient chime."

II.

Fierce cries of anguish mixed with shouts of
mirth
Rose as he spake. The Rebel Angel laugh'd
"I know that music. 'Tis the babbling Earth
Still to mine ears the selfsame song doth
waft.
Old is each note of it. Complaints and curses!
Murder and robbery in all forms of life,
And dust, for dust, with dust in endless
strife;
Princes for provinces, and pads for purses!

III.

"Creatures of crocodile-creating clay,
Think ye your croaking, or your crunching,
worth
Satanic intervention? Have your way,
You self-made victims of the vulgar Earth!

But long live Love, in whose light air-balloon
 Faith soars to heaven, self-confident and
 vain,
 And falls with broken limbs to earth again,
 Cursing her madcap voyage to the moon!

IV.

"The good old classic music! Passion quench'd
 In hissing tears. Fond greed of fancied gain
 That sinks in sight of port. The fist fierce-
 clinch'd
 That strikes the despot brow it served in vain.
 Thought's shamed confession 'Unattainable!'
 Affection's lamentation 'Lost!' Hope's
 moan
 'Defeated!' Effort's death-cry 'Over-
 thrown!'
 Well done, ye faithful servitors of Hell!

V.

"I recognize your work, and give it praise."
 And the Dark Spirit smiled. But suddenly
 Was wafted to him, from within that maze
 Of miserable sounds, a single sigh;
 So faint, it scarce divided the vexed air
 More than a silence; yet of such strange
 pain
 As waked the past in Satan's soul again,
 And thrill'd with memory his immense despair.

VI.

He, spreading sullen pinions, earthward bent
 Swift flight; to find the archer whose strong
 bow
 The torment of its venom'd shaft had sent
 Into such endless distances of woe.

There, scarce perceptible, the Fiend perceived
 A little saucy Imp, whose fingers fine
 Held with affected languor feminine
 A bunch of fresh-blown roses, dewy-leaved.

VII.

And from this posy now and then he took
 A single rose; and with a playful smile
 Leaflet from leaflet lightly loosening, shook
 The petals o'er a wretch who all the while
 Writhed under each in agony. That small
 Tormentor seem'd to sniff with keen de-
 light
 Some gust of suffering made more exquisite
 By every fragrant rose-leaf he let fall.

VIII.

"'Twas thou then?"—"Mighty Master, it
 was I."
 "What new atrocity of torturing
 Hast thou invented, Imp of Hell? That sigh
 Which made me shudder, even me thy king,
 How hast thou wrung it from a human heart?
 What was thy weapon? scorpions seethed
 in flame?
 Or fangs of adders? Name me, Imp, its
 name,
 And show me how 'tis shaped, thy devilish dart."

IX.

The little plump-cheek'd cherub of the pit
 (A kid among the goats, with budding
 horn)
 Falter'd—"Dread Lord, I know no name for
 it.
 Soft are my roses, and without a thorn."

“Why thus, then, dost thou strew them?” —

“Pardon me,”

The Hell-whelp whined, “this man hath
suffer’d so !”

“Ha, fool ! and thou dost pity him ? Go, go,
And learn mankind. Thou art a child, I see.”

X.

Blushing resentful, “Prince,” the Imp replied,
“What dost thou take me for ? ’Tis true my
brothers

Are bigger, but ” (and this he lisp’d with pride)

“I scorn their clumsy practice. How those
others

Get out of breath in running down their prey,
Fatigue themselves in torturing mankind !

My work, if easier, is more refined,

Look at this wretch’s wounds. How fresh are
they !

XI.

“From men he got them, Master, not from me.

Yet each hath been a master-stroke I swear.

Which, but that *one by one* he got them, he

Had surely not had strength enough to bear.

Man’s work, yet perfect ! Hate without remorse :

Deep thought : deliberate purpose : patient
skill :

Oh, nought was wanting to each human will

That stabb’d here ! How could this man’s
wounds be worse ?

XII.

“I merely keep them open. Touched again,

Tho’ ne’er so lightly, each one burns and gapes

A rose-leaf does it. By disguised disdain

That friendship’s frank commiseration apear,

Men taught me this. The trick is simple, see!
 Yet 'neath such touches strongest spirits
 wince."

"Away! away!" cried Hell's impatient
 Prince;

"Release yon sufferer, leave his soul to me."

XIII.

The chidden Imp, reluctant, left his prey,
 Like a chased fly. Man's arch accuser stood
 Contémplating man's victim. Silent lay
 The wretch, unconscious of worse neighborhood
 Than he had felt before. In that soul's curse
 The gaze of Satan, piercing, could detect
 How heart and brain met shatter'd to reflect
 In a flaw'd mirror a warp'd universe.

XIV.

"And thou hast suffer'd greatly?" musing said
 The Prince of Pain. The sufferer slowly raised
 The heavy burthen of a hopeless head,
 And, 'neath a half-uplifted eyelid, gazed
 Upon the Rebel Angel's ruin'd brow,
 And recognized Hell's Anarch, and replied
 Indifferently, with neither shame nor pride,
 Unto the voice of Satan, "Even as thou."

XV.

"Then 'twas too much," mutter'd the Fiend.
 "I own
 No peer in torment; and I scorn to share
 With human brows my solitary crown.
 Soul,—whom man's hate hath forced mine
 own to spare,
 Lest at the last extremity his prey
 Should prove in aught my rival,—rest!"
 And slow,
 With wistful gesture, from that human woe
 Satan, half-sighing, turn'd, and fled away.

XXXV.

QUESTIONABLE CONSOLATION.

I.

A BUTTERFLY (and had the wretch been born
With all the beauties that, at best, adorn
A butterfly's complete perfection, still
He but a butterfly had been, at best)
Came into life a cripple ; dispossessed
Of half his natural features ; born i' the chill,
Blemished, and misbegotten ; an abortion
Doom'd from the birth to suffering and distortion.

II.

One wing unfinished, and misshapen one :
Six legs he had, but of his six legs none
That served the purpose for which legs are
made :
The piteous pivot of his own distress,
Aye with self-torturing unsteadiness
About himself he turn'd ; and found no aid
In aught that life vouchsafed him, leg or wing,
To life's attainment of one wished-for thing.

III.

He saw the others hovering in the sun ;
He saw them seek each other ; saw them shun
Each other, by each other to be sought ;
He saw them (each, itself, a second flower)
On flowers, entranced by the transcendent
power
Of their own happiness ; he saw them, fraught
With frolic rapture, fearless wantons all !
And saw himself, unable even to crawl.

IV.

"And I," he thought, "I too, was meant to be
A wingèd joy, a wandering ecstasy!

Ah, must I envy, for his happier lot,
The wingless worm that hath, complete, whate'er
As worm he wants; who wants no more, to fare
Thro' life content; by life defrauded not
Of what mere life makes capable of joy
Even in a worm? still happier far than I!

V.

"I, to whom life refuses all things! all
Life's joy in earth, air, water! Still too tall
The tiniest stem that bears the lowliest flower
For me to climb! too rough air's lightest sigh
For me to ride! the nearest dewdrop, dry
Ere I can reach it! All, beyond my power!
All, save to disappear — go down — go by —
Sink out of life, not having lived — and die!"

VI.

The dying sun the insect's dying moan
O'erheard, and answer'd from his falling throne,
"Mourn not! I, even I, the sun, go down,
Sink, and drop into darkness. Look at me!"
— He sinks. In pompous purple, pillows he,
His kingly forehead, girt with golden crown,
And, slowly, with delight his gaze grows dim,
Seeing earth's sadness for the loss of him.

VII.

Delicious homage of a dear dismay
Paid to the happy, when they pass away,

By grief not theirs! Beneath him, prostrate,
lies
A world that worships him; and everywhere
Therein he finds some record rich and fair
Of his own power. He sinks: and wistful
eyes
His pathway follow to its glorious bourn.
He sinks: and longing voices sigh "Return!"

VIII.

He passes: but he hath not pass'd in vain.
He passes, proving by life's loss its gain,
And bearing with him what he leaves be-
hind.
He goes: rejoicing, "All that I have given
Memory makes mine again, and makes it even
Mine more completely than before. I shined
Rising and setting. All my light was shown,
And all my force was felt." Thus suns go down.

IX.

The boastful orb's last glories, lingering,
That cripple smote. "Go, glories! tell your
king,"
Smiling he said, "go, him that sent you tell,
Not all so wretched as I deem'd was I.
Since I have seen how suns go down, thereby
School'd have I been to know, and value
well,
What they, the happy,—they that have it
not,—
Would fain filch even from a wretch's lot,

X.

"The grandeur of its utter desolation."
All glowing with rebuke and shamed vexation

The braggart sun's resentful blushes burst,
 As o'er the deep, whose surface, and no more,
 His glory gilt, he, slowly sinking, bore
 This knowledge gain'd: that Misery at her
 worst
 Hath one poor grace of tragic interest
 Proud Pleasure vainly envies at his best.



XXXVI.

FORGIVE AND FORGET.

I.

"FORGIVE! forget! In haste I spoke.
 My speech was rash. Resent it not.
 Their words unwill'd my lips revoke.
 Stretch out thy hand. Be all forgot."
 But stunn'd, and still'd, the listener stood.
 From stricken heart to sullen brain
 Rebounding beat the insurgent blood,
 Then clogg'd the gates of life again.

II.

Those rosy roads where tranquil Thought
 And Feeling once, like merchant peers,
 Embracing mix'd the treasures brought
 From their harmonious hemispheres;
 In these, Resentment, outraged Pride,
 Wrong'd Honor, Wrath, and rebel Doubt
 Now strove, with forces wandering wide,
 From Reason's stately ranks thrown out.

III.

"'Forgive? Forget?' 'Tis lightly said,"
 The sullen answer came at last
 Half-crushed, as thro' the spikes it sped
 Of Pride's portcullis — teeth shut fast.

“‘Forgive! forget!’ And in my place,
Say what wouldst thou, the wronger, do?”
“I swear it, as I hope for grace,
I would forgive, forgetting too!

IV.

“And oh that in thy place I were,
The wronger thou, and mine the wrong!
Nay, hold me to the oath I swear,
And try me if it hold not strong.”
“Man, words are hasty: even so
Thyself hast said.” — “Not hasty this!
O trust it! try it! ask or do
Whate’er thou wilt.” — “*Thou* will’st it?” —
“Yes.”

V.

A blow . . . and he that spake the last
Beneath the bank where they two stood
Was rolling wrapt in foam, and fast
Borne onward by the boisterous flood.
He beats the blinding wave with strength:
Chill’d, shaking, aching, drench’d, to shore
He struggles: climbs the bank at length:
And feebly feels alive once more.

VI.

“Forgive! forget! I struck in haste.
My blow was rash. Resent it not.
Is wrong forgiven not wrong effaced?
Stretch out thy hand. Be all forgot.”
In wrathful mood he turn’d about,
Remember’d — realized — forgave —
And, with a rueful smile, held out
His right hand dripping from the wave.

VII.

"Nay, overhasty still! First dry
Yon chilly drench that drips amain,
For who would care to embrace (not I!)
A slobber'd gutter retching rain?"
"Unjust!" he cried. "Take witness, heaven,
Struck, sicken'd, soak'd to a sop by thee,
The shock, the shame, I have forgiven,
Nor mine the fault if chill'd I be.

VIII.

"My garments drip, my blood runs cold,
My limbs are loosed, my lips are blue,
And if I live till I grow old,
'Twill be, methinks, no thanks to you.
I heed not how my hurts were got,
I only know they hurt me yet;
But all, it seems, suffices not,
Half-drown'd, you'd have me still not wet!"

IX.

"'Tis well! Thou understand'st me now.
I, too, can strive: I, too, can brave
What Friendship feels from Friendship's blow:
Can pluck my soul from out the wave
Of overwhelming wrath and shame,
Reach shore, and, shivering there (like thee)
Embrace my friend. But not the same
As Friendship was can Friendship be.

X.

"For lost to love, tho' love may last,
Is all that love must needs forgive;
And, tho' forgot, the painful past
Its prey forgets not. Maim'd we live.

In memory's haunts a horror grows,
That marks one unremember'd spot;
And still the hoary hemlock blows
Where blows the blue forget-me-not."

XXXVII.

THE MOUNTAINS OF TIME.

THE rest that man runs after lures the wretch
From every place where he at rest may be;
So that his legs are ever on the stretch,
And not one moment of repose hath he.
This frenzy is in certain folks so strong
That, when they find the pavement of the city
Where they walk up and down the whole day
long
Not rough enough, however hard and gritty,
It is their wont, some once or twice a year,
To slip away, as wild as hawk or merlin,
From all that city folks hold justly dear
In London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin,
And seek out mountain places nature made
On purpose for uncomfortable walking.
To swell the number of these fools, I paid
A visit to the Alps; which, after stalking
Thro' stony vales, I reach'd, and sought repose
Fatiguingly a whole flea-bitten night,
Outfidgeted in a chill Châlet, close
By a green Glacier. There, before the light
I from bed's antisoporific rose,
And set forth booted on my bootless road;
Wondering which first would wear the other out,
The mountain or the boots that o'er it strode.
But both the granite strong and leather stout

Remain'd intact: and tho' to own it loath,
'Tis I that was worn out between them both.
And, when I reach'd the summit where I thought
To pluck pure rapture, life's high alpine flower,
Faint in the snow I stumbled, and besought
My guide to let me sleep away the hour
'Twas settled we must pass there. He replied
"As *Monsieur* pleases: but make haste he
must."

"I'll sleep, then, in a hurry, friend," I sigh'd.
The good man nodded: fish'd a cheese and crust
Out of his wallet; sat down at my side;
And munch'd his breakfast while his watch he
kept.

Dim round about me wink'd the prospect wide,
Down sank my heavy eyelids, and I slept.

Or slept not? That's the question. Sleep or
waking,

No change of scene across my vision came.
The mountains, which I had erewhile been tak-
ing

Such stupid pains to mount, with frozen frame
Still clasp'd the picture which, of Fancy's mak-
ing

Or Nature's own, was round me, still the same.
The only change (for which I can't account)
Was that my sense of lassitude was gone,
And force was mine to pass from mount to
mount,

For miles and miles, still upward and still on.
But what is certainly just now surprising
Is that I felt not then the least surprise
Either at this continual uprising
And journeying onward, just as the bird flies,
Or at the strange means of mine own devising
I found within me (how, I can't surmise)
Of getting, to my mute interrogation,
From all those mountains, marvellous replies.

Much this discovery pleased me as a new one.
And to a modest mamelary peak
Which, tho' an Alp (a genuine and a true one)
Yet, being milder-minded, so to speak,
Of aspect than the rest (who seem'd to view one
With countenances any thing but meek)
Inspired me with less awe than all his brothers,
I said as much. "Ay," musingly quoth he,
"The others speak not." — "Friend," said I,
 "what others?"
"The other mountains," short he answer'd me.
"What other mountains?" With a touch of
 mirth
Sublime, he laugh'd "The mountains of the
 earth."
"Pray, may I ask, then, of what kind they be,
The mountains I've the honor of addressing?"
"Certainly. Mountains, not of Space, are we,"
He answer'd, "but of Time." — "Of Time?"
 confessing
Imprudently mine ignorance, said I,
"This is the first time I have ever heard
That Time has mountains. Pray what are
 they made of?"
As tho' he thought this question most absurd,
Mine Alp survey'd me sternly, icily;
Then with a slight shrug I felt sore afraid of
Half loosed an avalanche, and grumbled "Pooh,
 man!
Are they not peers and kinsmen, Time and
 Space?
And pray to Time, the peer of Space, do you,
 man,
Deny his rights, his mountains?" — "Heaven
 forbid, no!"
I hasten'd to reply. "But, save Your Highness,
I know not (heartily I wish I did know!)
Nor can I" (here I stammer'd, seized with shy-
 ness)

“Imagine what they’re made of. As for Space,
 Why, all the earth affords to Space material
 For mountain-making. But that’s not the case
 With Time, which is” . . . “What’s Time?”
 mock-magisterial
 Of mien, he interposed in accents quizzical,
 “What’s Time?”

Now, tho’ ’tis true I might
 have quoted
 A dozen learned authors metaphysical
 Who have . . . well, well, not wasted, but de-
 voted
 A deal of time to the consideration
 Of what Time is, — yet (as with shame I noted)
 Ere I had time to bring out one quotation,
 Contemptuously looking down on me,
 My questioner relieved the hesitation
 His question caused me; for “Whate’er Time
 be,”
 He added, answering his own query, “Time,
 Whose child am I . . . Tho’, if I say I *am*,
 Since naked truth’s too freezingly sublime
 I use, for your sake, a mere verbal sham:
 For, truth to say, I’m nothing of the kind,
 And Time is nothing, and there’s nothing true.
 But that’s beyond the limits of your mind,
 And naturally bounded point of view.
 Oh, no offence, man! Certes you’d not find
 Such terms offensive, if you only knew
 The advantage of those bounds; wherein con-
 fined,
 Man’s reason moves with accuracy thro’
 The crowded thoroughfares of sense, that wind
 In all directions up and down his brain.
 These bounds are paved off pathways which al-
 low
 The poor foot-passenger, who else were slain,
 Keeping along the narrow tracks they show,
 To walk securely, and escape the train

Of steeds and chariots that, fast speeding, flow
 And flash all round him, in a roaring tide
 Certain to crush him if he once broke thro'
 His pavement barriers upon either side.
 So, to the point. We here, who people Time,
 As bodies people Space, — the Hours are we.
 The Past upheaves us. Some of us, sublime,
 And others lowly, as no doubt you see.
 That's as Time makes us, of what men make
 him.

I'm but the Hour of a small office clerk,
 Whose whole life was so quiet, dim, and prim,
 There's nothing in me to invite remark.
 The man who made what Time hath made of
 me

Lived seventy years; full fifty years of which
 He served the State. When just about to be
 Promoted to a post that was the pitch
 Of his life's aim (tho' nought to boast of) he,
 Poor devil, died an hour too soon. And thus
 The mouse with which I am parturient
 Remains within me, evermore, a *mus*
Nondum abortus. His own fault, I grant.
 But since your time is short, make much of
 us.

Seize the occasion. Ask whate'er you want.
 Many a point remains yet to discuss.
 Question the higher Hours."

I took the hint;
 And, having scarcely time to question Time,
 Address'd a mount whose purple brows did
 print

The azure air with pines, that strove to climb
 From cloud to cloud into the golden tint
 That wrapp'd his summit from the rosy prime.
 And "I," said he, "am, in a lover's life
 The longest Hour. For ten impatient years
 He, with relentless fortune, lived at strife.
 At length love triumph'd over foes and fears.

And in a wood, where she had sworn to meet
 him,
 The coming of his mistress did he wait,
 While every rustling leaf conspired to cheat him,
 Mocking her steps. She came — an hour too late.
 And, in that hour, such doubts and such despairs
 Convulsed his amorous imagination
 That I became volcanic unawares,
 And choking with internal conflagration,
 As you perceive.”

But I, the truth to say,
 Perceived not even the slightest indication
 Of fires internal in that mountain gray.
 Tho', after somewhat closer contemplation,
 I spied, 'tis true, a bare patch on his pate,
 Which some long empty crater might have been;
 But I believe 'twas only baldness.

Straight

I turn'd me towards a giant glacier, green
 With hideous glooms. “What art thou?” I
 exclaim'd.

“I,” sigh'd the icy Horror, and his breath
 Froze the blood in me when his name he named,
 “Am the Last Hour of one condemn'd to death
 For having murder'd life. Look at me close.
 Throughout the Hour I am, one after one,
 All the lost moments of that man's life rose
 Up to the surface of his soul. Deeds done,
 Days undone, wild desires, and wicked wishes,
 Pure joys defiled, and faded memories fond.
 One after one they rose up like dead fishes
 To the sick surface of a poison'd pond.
 He, in this Hour a hundred times eternal,
 A child once more, the games of childhood
 play'd;

Felt on his brow the kiss of lips maternal;
 A father's counsels heard and disobey'd;
 Far, far away, by flowery paths infernal,
 From innocence, repose, and virtue stray'd;

Felt in his breast love's primal passion burn-
ing,

The pang of jealousy's envenom'd dart,
The shock of faith betray'd, the bitter turning
Of love to hate, the ravage of the heart,
Despair, debauchery, destruction, crime,
Conscience, and memory — the soul's last cry!
Behold me. All the emptiness of Time,
And all the wretchedness of Life, am I!"

Smitten with fear, I fled. Nor dared I deem
My soul in safety till I 'scaped the sight
Of that atrocious solitude. My dream
Meanwhile pursued me till I reach'd a height
Surpassing all the others. 'Twas so high
That I perceived below me, far below,
The tallest Alps no bigger to mine eye
Than grains of salt. Nought breathed between
the brow

Of this stupendous berg and the bare sky.
Oh never yet with such a load of snow
Was earth encumber'd! "Here, at last," said I,
"Must be the Chimborazo, nothing less,
Of human thought. For surely, surely, he
Who raised to such a height the heaviness
Of this all-else-surpassing pile must be
Earth's master-mind. Time meets eternity,
Stretch'd to this altitude." Then loud I cried
"O Atlas, Atlas! tell me, who created
Thy giant form?" Long while no voice replied,
And in the silence of the waste I waited
Wondering, what bard had built this mighty
epos:

At length, a plaintive, sleepy whisper sigh'd
"I am the weariest Hour yet known to fate,
Pass'd by a schoolboy, in midsummer tide,
Condemn'd, for misdemeanors, to translate
A dozen chapters of Cornelius Nepos."

Soon as that voice I heard, I seem'd to see
 And feel myself transform'd — evaporated,
 Then again frozen — and, at last, to be
 That mountain in wide azure isolated.
 Or, rather, seem'd that mountain part of me.
 For I remember'd that my life had dated
 Just such an hour. My soul became one yawn.
 My lassitude return'd. Again I stumbled
 And sank down, just where I had sunk at dawn,
 As faintly "*Alcibiades*," I mumbled,
 "*Cliniæ filius, Atheniensis*" . . .

"Come, wake, sir! Time's up, and we've miles
 to make yet."

My guide's voice thus recall'd me to my senses.
 I rose, and rubb'd mine eyes; and, scarce awake
 yet,

Look'd round — and recognized them every one:
 The amorous and aged Don-Juanic
 Volcano, with his bald head in the sun,
 Proud of his long-quench'd spritely spurts vol-
 canic;

The mamelon in labor with its mouse;
 The convict's frozen conscience; that titanic
 Alp-upon-alp of taskwork tyrannous;
 At whose sight, I sprang forward with a thrill
 Of anguish, trying vainly to complete
 My chapter of Cornelius Nepos still.
 The guide, in front, cried "Eh sir, mind your
 feet!

Nor look down yonder till we've turn'd the hill.
 The tug's to come yet." In his winding-sheet
 The convict glared upon me, grim and chill.

"How call you yonder glacier, my good man, eh?"
 "Sir," said the guide, "we call it *Le Condamné*.
 Mind where you step now." — "Yes," I mur-
 mured, "yes,
Atheniensis Alcibiades" . . .

XXXVIII.

CONSERVATION OF FORCE.

I.

A MUSICIAN once, in the twilight time,
 Musing sat by the instrument
 Whose keys knew how, with a kindred chime,
 To interpret to him what his musings meant.
 Then a picture, the man had seen that day,
 And, because of its color or composition,
 Had, deep in the soul of him, borne away,
 Unmiss'd, from its place in the Exhibition,
 Began to suffer a mystic change,
 And pass from the soul where its own lay pent
 On the wings of a melody wild and strange;
 Which, as 'twere in a dream, his fingers went
 Wandering after, over the keys;
 Whose notes were thus scatter'd, and then again
 blent
 Till the twilight was fill'd with the music of
 these.

II.

But when, like a wind from a land unknown,
 That comes and goes with a will of its own,
 The strain died out, and left, as it died,
 The throbbing silence unsatisfied,
 A friend of the player's who, listening, sat
 In that twilight chamber beside him, cried
 With a sigh, "Continue!" "Continue what?
 I have not been playing," the player replied,
 "But only thinking — ah, thinking? nay,
 But rather dreaming all thought away
 About a picture I saw to-day."
 "Strange!" said the other; "and whilst unto thee
 I was listening, just ere thy music faded,
 A poem impress'd itself on me,
 As clear as a picture freshly painted.

Farewell, ere I lose it!" Then home went he,
And wrote the poem to which that strain
Had changed itself in the poet's brain.

III.

This poem another painter read;
And it haunted that other painter's head,
Till of it another picture he made;
Which, like the first, was exhibited.

IV.

When, after many a year was passed,
Those pictures twain were uphung at last
Side by side on the selfsame wall
Of the same museum, they did not fall
Into the arms of each other, the one
Crying "My father!" the other "My son!"
Tho' in line direct was their filiation.
But, like two athletes, they struggled and fought
Against each other without cessation.
And men, taking part in the contest, brought
Daily, to deepen it, fresh contestation.
Critic and craftsman, with praise or blame,
Choosing their side in the battle, became,
These the passionate partisans
Of the style of the earlier master; those
Of the style of the later; until two clans
Of disciples, two schools of art, arose,
Which, in turn, put forth for the world's applause
Masterpieces of different kinds;
The unlike effects of a single cause,
One force transmitted thro' many minds.

V.

For, tho' none of the critics of this was aware,
And not even the craftsmen the secret knew,
Yet all these pictures the offspring were
Of a single picture — the first of the two.

XXXIX.

HOMERIDES.

I.

NATURE hath given the Stag a wondrous gift.
Love, and the force that loving hearts doth lift
To lofty courage by the sweet desire
Of winning love, have with creative fire
Gone to his burning brain, and thence burst out
In that brave crest he proudly bears about.
Thus, in love's complete beauty arm'd, he roams
The gusty realms of passion, and becomes
A living tempest; with whate'er in storm
Hath being — motion swift, majestic form,
Strife, rapture, peril, and the pomp of power.
Then, like the storm which hath its one wild
hour
And passes, he — his passion once subdued
By surfeit fierce — returns to solitude.

II.

A Beetle, burrowing where a Stag had been,
Humm'd "Ha, brave buck! here hast thou left,
I ween,
To me who live upon thy leavings, fine
And fit material for a crown like thine!
For I surmise, since matter's everywhere,
That every thing is matter. Maidens, fair
And pure, I've seen, who stoop'd to pluck and
place
(Charm'd by the beauty of it and the grace)
In that sweet haunt of the Hesperides,
The guardian of whose hidden apples is
Jealous Desire, some flow'ret haply fed
On the foul scrapings of the cattle-shed :

And, if such filth could into beauty bud,
 Beauty, thou art but metamorphosed mud !
 Eureka ! Here must the Stag's secret lie.
 Could I but catch it, doubtless also I
 Should get the grace to which my soul aspires,
 And sprout those horns the horn-mad world ad-
 mires."

III.

With which intent, on what he found he fed ;
 Till gradually from his insect head
 The superfluity of matter there
 Oozed out in frontal ornaments that were
 Not all unlike the antlers of a stag.
 Then, quite contented, he began to brag,
 "A stag am I, and brave mine antlers be !"

IV.

And yet he was but a stag-beetle, he.

MORAL.

The poet's form is to his followers known.
 The poet's secret is the poet's own.
 'Tis born and buried in the poet's soul :
 Passion its prelude, solitude its goal.



XL.

POINTS DE VUE—POINT DE VUE.

I.

A DWELLER in a city of the plain,
 Bound on a journey to a mountain land,
 First pray'd a famous traveller to explain
 How best he might behold, and understand,

The rumor'd wonders of that lofty region,
For by report the name of them was legion.

II.

"There's but one way," the traveller replied,
"Beneath the highest mountain of them all
There lies a little town. Get there a guide:
Then, rest not till you reach its summit tall.
The ascent is difficult. I grant 'tis double—
But it is also twice well worth—the trouble.

III.

"For by this means not only will you be
Rewarded with an admirable view,
But 'tis, indeed, the *only* means to see
At one wide eyesweep, adequately true
And comprehensive in its contemplation,
The whole of that high land's configuration."

IV.

Struck by the justice of his friend's advice,
Which promised an incomparable sight,
And full of ardor, on his enterprise
The man set forth. He reach'd the inn at night
Commended by the traveller; went to bed,
Slept well, waked early, rose, dress'd, breakfasted;

V.

And from the casement of his room could see
That mighty mountain clad in cloud and snow.
The guide inform'd him that, to mount it, three
Good days 'twould take him; to descend it,
two.
But he before him had a fortnight's time,
Nor need begin in haste that task sublime.

VI.

So he resolved to make a first essay
By visiting the hills and slopes that lower,
Lapping the flanks of that high mountain, lay
Like housetops huddled round a minster tower;
This promenade was picturesque, and soon
Completed in one pleasant afternoon.

VII.

'Tis true the prospects it unfolded each
One corner only of the picture show'd :
But all the others he proposed to reach,
One after one, by the same easy road,
Encouragingly smooth for a beginner,
The following days 'twixt breakfast-time and
dinner.

VIII.

"For thus shall I have witness'd all," he said,
"In course of time; and witness'd all without
Foregoing for that purpose board or bed,
And being thoroughly fatigued no doubt."
So said, so done; and home again content,
Having climb'd all those little hills, he went.

IX.

Their various points of view had pleased him
well ;
Their slopes were wooded, and their tops were
green :
From each he saw across the neighboring dell :
But saw no farther : for each crest had been
In turn commanded by some other crest,
Just high enough to overtop the rest.

X.

In silence did his travell'd friend receive
The tale of those short journeys; and replied
"The charm of your excursion, I perceive,
Lay in those little slopes that, every side,
Shut out the distance; hills climb'd yesterday
Bounding to-morrow's prospect all the way.

XI.

"With not more trouble, and in shorter time,
You, following my counsel, would have seen
The whole horizon's airy orb sublime
Reveal'd beyond each decorated screen
Of those low mountains. For that summit tall
Of which I told you doth surmount them all.

XII.

"I, in man's thought, as 'twere a bird behold,
Born to disport itself in space, with wing
Unfetter'd by the wires, tho' they be gold,
Of any cage. Albeit I grant birds sing
In cages. But that, doubtless, is a merit
They from the freeborn songsters do inherit.

XIII.

"And better, to my thinking, one high note
Dropt by the soaring skylark from the sky
Than all that's warbled from a cageling's throat.
Minds are there, too, whose natural home is
high;
One word they drop in passing is worth more
Than tutor'd twitterers twitter by the score."

XLI.

PYRRHONISM.

OR,

THE HAUNTED HEN.

I.

A HEN, whom the bounty of Providence made
A parent prolific, with motherly pride
Every day a fresh egg in the henroost laid,
Which to hatch into life she then patiently tried.
But, whilst on those eggs she was brooding warm
In a placid glow of parental pleasure,
Chill was the change as she spied with alarm
A Weasel, who watch'd her, aware of her treasure.
And this Hen henceforth was so haunted by
The chilly charm of that Weasel's eye,
That, night by night, in her dreaming sleep
It was ever the selfsame dream she dream'd;
How, changed to a Weasel, she crept in the deep
Of the dark to the henroost; and, stealthily
 seem'd
With the craft of a Weasel to suck and destroy
Those eggs that, by day, were the poor fowl's joy.

II.

This double identity, made up of two —
Her waking and sleeping self — at last
The Hen's life into confusion threw,
And over it, daily and nightly, cast
The spell of a twofold trouble. By day
She lived in such dread of her midnight dream
That at length not an egg was she able to lay:
Yet this daily sterility did not redeem

From its nightly plague her spirit tormented,
When she, by the dream's transforming power,
Changed into a Weasel, was discontented
At finding no more any eggs to devour.

III.

"Ah, had I," she sigh'd, "but the gift to forget,
I might hope to recapture lost happiness yet!
Then, by day, with a spirit unvexed should I
Taste the soothing sweets of maternity,
Whilst the ravisher's raptures of cruel delight
Would be mine, with young victims to ruin, by
night.

But alas! as it is, I can neither enjoy
The rude libertine's lust, nor the love of the
mother;
Who, combining two selves that each other
destroy,
Fail to realize either the one or the other!"

MORAL.

So are we: who, both author and critic in one,
Miss the comfort accorded to either alone.
By alternate creative and critical powers
Is our suffering identity sunder'd and torn:
And the tooth of the critic that's in us devours
Half the author's conceptions before they are
born.



XLII.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MARSH.

A REVERY.

I.

Low natures cannot even forgive the good
Another's greatness on their fate entails.
'Twixt sea and land a granite Mountain stood,
No farther than a wounded bittern trails

His broken wing, beyond a Swampy Flood
Foul with green ooze. The inland-blowing
gales
That died upon his summit did bequeath
A quiet climate to the land beneath.

II.

The gracious image of this Mountain slept
Unruffled in the dark of that dull Mere ;
Where rarely even a lazy ripple crept
To bid the bulrush shake his languid spear
O'er livid streaks of stagnant scum, that kept
The calm contour, with every outline clear,
And all the colors of the portraiture,
Tho' painted on a filthy surface, pure.

III.

But daily ever, when the sun was low,
And, in a rosy reflex aureole,
The guardian Mount's gray head began to glow,
From out his marble-breasted body stole,
And sidled, lingering to the lowland slow,
What seem'd the Mountain's disembodied
soul :
A stealthy, shy, and solitary elf,
The insubstantial semblance of himself.

IV.

Over the fens it fared, where dreamy rows
Of cattle farmward moved their wandering
camp ;
But scarce had reach'd the rivage, ere there rose
Resentful challenge from that churlish
Swamp ;
Hoarse as the choral croak that overflows
In gleaming eaves of Spring the shallows damp,
And reedy brinks, of their spawn-mantled bogs,
From many thousand throats of querulous frogs :

"Halt, vagabond ! halt where thou art !
 Nor insult with thy presence abhorr'd
 The floor of my palace. Depart,
 Silly slave of an insolent lord !

"And thou, broad braggart, I pray
 Invade not my virginal bed.
 Let the earth to thy foot give way,
 And the heaven to thy horrible head :

"Parade thine imperial mantle,
 Which this lackey behind thee doth bear,
 Till it leaves not uncover'd a cantle
 Of the subject world — elsewhere :

"But sully not with it my fountain !
 Queen am I in my realm : and thine,
 Tho' it prison the sun, proud mountain,
 I allow not alliance with mine."

V.

The gracious Mount, aware of his wrong'd worth,
 Made generous answer in grave tones and
 sweet ;
 Around him gazing, east, west, south, and north,
 With kingly calm that claim'd attention meet ;
 While that sick shrew spat her foul spittle forth
 And in her own filth wallow'd at his feet.
 His voice was as the sighing of a breeze
 Borne on the bosom of the boundless seas :

"Friend, leave to the human race
 The inhuman habit of war !
 To each in the world his place,
 And we are whatever we are.
 To each his good and his ill :
 And the ill of the good made mine
 Is that, doom'd to forever be still,
 I must ever for motion pine.
 The bees and the butterflies
 Hover over the blossom bells ;
 And the birds in the balmy skies,
 And the feathery-sail'd see l-cells,

They wander about; and I,
As I watch them, wish that I were
A bee, or a butterfly,
Or a little bird of the air!
But to each in the world his place,
And to every ill some good.
Unto me my granite base,
And to thee thy shelter'd flood.
Yet O, how the spirit in me
Is troubled when bound, alas,
To this granite base, I see
(As the pure winds over me pass)
The leaflet leap on the tree,
And the flow'ret nod in the grass,
And the long grass wave on the lea,
And the reed in the wan morass!
And thou, too? Dost thou not feel
(When the sedge to the low wind sighs)
Sweet tremors over thee steal,
And a rapture of ripples arise?
Say, wouldst thou not follow the wind
In a wave of wonder away,
Were thy waters unconfined
By their osier cradle gray?
The hungry ocean, hidden
By me from the heedless land;
Which it leaps to devour, and, chidden,
Falls back at my mute command:
Fares it better than thou who, rocked
By low-breathing winds, and fann'd
To sleep, liest safely locked
In the hollow of earth's huge hand?
No! it suffers the same effect,
Only all on a vaster scale.
And if thy small fleets unwrecked
Are but blown by a baby gale,
(Dead leaflets gayly specked,
With a spider's web for a sail)
Whilst yonder (a floating fort)
The battle-ship huge, that mocks
The enemy's bellowing port,
Sinks shatter'd on surfy rocks.
Who shelters thee, thankless Queen,
Secure in thy small domain?
I, the friend of whose shade serene
Thy churlish lips complain!
I, the giant who stand between
Thy rest and the roaring main!"

VI.

The brave old Mount, by wounding weathers
scarr'd,

O'er the low-sunken, safely-shelter'd lea,
Which his gray head from howling gusts did
guard,

And o'er the rolling ridges of the sea,
Sent far his grave, calm, satisfied regard;

Then glanced athwart that gloomy Swamp,
but she

Sigh'd only, sullen, from her sedgy beach,
As, smiling, he resumed, in mountain-speech:

“O rapturous, wandering wings,
O rivulets, running forever,
O winds, clouds, waves, happy things!
I, that never may follow you, never
Taste with you a traveller's bliss,
As ye roam over moorland and meadow,
I, at least (and who grudges me this?)
Send forth on his travels my Shadow.
'Tis a gentle and timorous sprite,
That never, except when night
Is falling, ventures far;
And, albeit inquisitive, most
Discreet; not given to boast,
As other travellers are;
Pure, tho' it sleep in the slime;
Shy as a young bird thrown
Unfledged from its nest sublime;
Yet with secret joys of its own;
And by only two at a time
Is its intimate sweetness known.
But of any two lovers, I pray,
Be it ask'd if they love not the shade:
And the happy ones, boy and maid,
Will blush as they turn away
Sighing and smiling, afraid
Its secret bliss to betray;
Whilst the others, whose hearts be cleft
For the grave of a lost love, laid
Dead in its birthplace, — 'reft
Of the hopes that with shadows have play'd,

Will sigh 'Our sole happiness left
 Is to wander and weep in the shade.'
 Why is it? They know not why.
 'Tis an antique mystery.
 This nursling of Night's lone heart
 Hath known sorrow, and learn'd to be still
 But it cherisheth, pure and apart,
 In its own chaste silence chill,
 A memory, mighty, immense
 Of passionate love and pain;
 A memory mixed with a sense
 Of deep desire and disdain;
 A memory made intense
 By a love that was loved in vain!"

VII.

Here, soughing in the sedge, the Water made
 A restless moan of weary resignation;
 As who should say "I heed not what is said,
 Altho' I hear it." And a dull pulsation
 Darken'd the melancholy moonbeam laid
 To listless rest along the late stagnation
 Of the now rippled liquid in her lone
 Low reedy creeks. The musing Mount went
 on:

"Ere Love was acquainted with Sorrow,
 Ere Eve was a wife or a mother,
 Ere the even was 'ware of the morrow,
 Or yet either had banished the other,
 In Eden the Night and the Morn
 Were dissever'd as soon as born.
 The *Fiat Lux* thunders thro' heaven!
 And, awakening Creation, hath riven
 The resonant portals of Light.
 All gushing with glorious surprises
 The Sun, in his royalty, rises,
 And bursts on the realm of the Night.
 He comes! and the Silence profound,
 That hath watch'd with drooped wings spread
 afar
 Over Night's maiden dreams, at the sound
 Of the steps of the conquering star,

Is smitten and scatter'd in flight.
 And he comes: lifts the veil from her breast,
 And sees naked the beautiful Night.
Venit, vidit . . . who knows not the rest?
 O what an awakening was there!
 What rapture! and O what despair!
 One moment hath ruin'd forever
 Love and power. Alas, he, and she?
 Light and Darkness? Impossible! Never,
 O never, such union can be!
 Such, of old, was the destiny vain
 Of that incompatible twain:
 And such is the endless condition
 Of Passion, the child of disdain
 And desire, — life and death in transition!
 Hope snatched from the breast of despair
 Is hers, and a life that is death;
 For she breathes in the deadliest air,
 And she dies of but one quiet breath.
 Her food is the fruit that's forbidden:
 Her pleasure a prayer never granted:
 Her strength is a wish that is chidden:
 And her weakness the thing that she wanted!"

VIII.

High winds, that vex'd not the still earth, began
 To smite the upmost heaven. With fitful
 light
 The stricken moon thro' fleecy cloudlets ran.
 The Mountain, from that drift of dark and
 bright
 Which o'er him glimpsed in alternation wan,
 Caught mystic motion; and in spectral flight
 Hovering above the melancholy plain,
 The spirit that was in him spake again:

"And the Sun, never-resting, forsaken,
 And fierce in his anguish of light,
 Cries thro' heaven 'Where art thou? awaken,
 And return to me, fugitive Night!'
 But she, whose unsatisfied lover
 Thus renews his importunate flame,
 Where hides she? with what does she cover
 Her beauty, her babe, and her shame?

Ask yon quivering splendors, that swim
 The blue dark in bright shoals overspread,
 If they know in what solitude dim
 Night is hiding her desolate head:
 And those liveried lackeys of Light
 (In the cause of Light's glory enlisted)
 Will answer 'What is it, the Night?
 'Tis a myth that has never existed!'
 Ask the planet whose golden urn
 Flows over with flaming amber
 As he, courtier-like, taketh his turn
 In the sun's bright antechamber:
 He laugheth 'The Sun is my king:
 The fallen are soon forgot:
 I follow the conquering:
 And the Night? . . . I know her not.'
 And the sliding meteor will say,
 As he falls in a fiery drop,
 'Who cares? I have miss'd my way,
 And can neither retrace it nor stop.'
 And, blushing, the Dawn will sigh
 'I awaked ere my dreams were done.
 They were fair; but I know not, I,
 If I dream'd of the Night . . . or the Sun?'
 And, if all things else deny her,
 Renounce the Night or ignore,
 Go, ask of the ghostly fire
 That hovers on that pale shore,
 Where, embark'd in its phantom comet,
 The wandering embryo waits
 God's finger to fashion from it
 A world of yet unknown fates:
 It will mutter 'I mark'd her creeping,
 By the light of a latent moon,
 Between two worlds and weeping,
 Like a beggar that asks a boon
 At the gates of a rich man's place,
 With a shamed and sorrowful mien:
 And I think it was to embrace
 Her sleeping babe unseen.'

"That babe, is it Bliss? But aloud
 Breathe the name of it never! At best
 'Tis a treasure that, risk'd if avow'd,
 Is in fear and in peril possessed:
 Whose possessor, as one that encroacheth
 Upon ground that's forbidden, by night,

All a-tremble his treasure approacheth
But to bury it deep out of sight.
And, O thou to whom never before
Hath been utter'd this antique story,
Insult not the shade (tho' no more
Than a shadow it be) of lost glory.
For what it must be at the last
The Present doth ill to scorn.
And the Present shall be the Past
Ere the Future it boasts be born."

IX.

Never before that venerable Mount
Had spoken at such length : nor ever met
A listener in whose ear he could recount
Without ungracious interruption, yet,
The fancies vague that, like a vented fount
Whose struggling waters sudden outlet get,
Upwell'd within him, and pour'd wide and free
His secret thoughts in wandering revery.

X.

But ah! the old story-teller's pride received
A sharp rebuff — not loud, but, certes, deep!
When, pausing for an answer, he perceived
The Water had been all this while asleep.
Sleep thou, too, good old Mount! with heart un-
grieved,
Tho' heedless ears thy long discourse hold
cheap.
Sleep, and good dreams be thine! There are
sins worse
Than too much talk in unregarded verse.

XI.

And, if men miss the moral of thy strain,
Tell them 'tis in themselves, and tell them
why.

Wherever croaking commonwealths complain
 Of their old mountain bulwarks and deny
 Even the shadow of greatness, where in vain
 Is heard the voice of hoar Authority,
 There, lost among the morals of the time,
 May haply lurk the moral of thy rhyme.



XLIII.

TELEOLOGY.

I.

THE casement of a chamber in an inn
 O'erlook'd a courtyard full of weeds and stones.
 And on the stones and weeds that deck'd therein
 A haunt of blue-flies, heap'd with offal, bones,
 Ordures, and broken pots, and rusty tin,
 (Which 'neath this casement made a goodly
 show)

Out of the lattice from the room within,
 A traveller whom it lodged was wont to throw
 The soapsuds daily scraped from cheek and chin,
 His razor's refuse, mixed with frothy flow
 Of basin-rinsings warm; nor cared a pin
 Whose pate might catch such casual chrism.

Below

Upon a dunghill, thirsty, parched, and thin,
 A miserable nettle chanced to grow.

II.

This wretched weed, which else had died of
 drought,
 In the chance rescue of that daily rain
 Its own advantage found; and, free from doubt,
 Perceiving in it adaptation plain.

Of means to a beneficent design,
 Exclaim'd "O Urticarian Jupiter,
 What wisdom is there in thy will divine!
 Who dost on all thy universe confer
 Convincing proof of providence benign.
 By what supreme administrative feat
 Hast thou contrived for me, thy grateful child,
 Recurrence of this tepid torrent sweet!
 Which every morning with its moisture mild
 Revives my strength, and heals all hurtful heat.
 Whilst, regularly rising day by day,
 Thy gracious sun rules all the rolling year,
 Warms the wide world with his benignant ray,
 And in their season bids my buds appear.
 How admirably organized is all
 This wondrous world! whose aspect every-
 where
 Reveals to reverent thought, in great and small,
 Contrivance order'd with consummate care
 Its maker's purpose to fulfil: which is
 THE HAPPINESS OF NETTLES. Mighty Jove,
 On me thy mercies have not fallen amiss.
 Thy purpose I divine: and, proud to prove
 My part therein, each seed of mine that settles
 Shall do its best to fill the world with nettles."

III.

Thus, in good faith, the thriving weed adored
 The patronage of providence; and, wedding
 The graceful action to the grateful word,
 Began to cover with a verdant spreading
 Of stinging stuff the filth it chanced to find
 A root in (how it knew not, neither why)
 'Mid shards, and scurf, and scum of every kind:
 Convinced it was promoting worthily
 The strenuous effort of almighty Jove
 A virgin nettle forest to create.

IV.

Meanwhile, the traveller in the room above
 Had finish'd the affair for which of late
 He had been lingering in that inn. The
 man

Was (as the Fabulist forgot to state
 When he this Fable in hot haste began)
 A manufacturer in search of coal
 To feed his forges at the cheapest rate.
 And, having visited at last the whole
 Coal-bearing region, rummaged it about,
 And made his choice, now, wishing to get rid
 Of the rejected samples, he threw out
 (To join the other refuse that unchid
 Sprawl'd in the heat upon that heap of dung)
 The residue of his unclean collection.

V.

By woful luck there chanced to fall among
 That grimy clan, in their abrupt ejection,
 A heavy lump of carboniferous schist,
 Which flat upon the flowering nettle flopp'd;
 Whose crushed philosophy, collapsing, miss'd
 Benignant purpose in the blow that stopp'd
 Philosophizing with a pang of pain.
 "Fatality, and malediction!" hiss'd
 The mangled weed with indignation vain,
 "What Demon rules this universe, and slays
 Without a purpose, making earth one hell?
 Blind Chance it is! and since blind Chance
 obeys
 No guiding law, methinks it might as well
 Have fall'n on either side of me, instead
 Of tumbling thus precisely on my head!"

VI.

Uttering this blasphemy the nettle died.
But not before his gaze, fast growing dim,
Had contemplated with a mournful pride
The tumulary pile that cover'd him.
For there he mark'd the impress of a plant
Of perished centuries. That antique print
Of vegetable forms no more extant
He took for epitaph, admiring in 't
The grandeur of his race in days gone by,
And "*semper virens!*" was his life's last sigh.

MORAL.

Self-Interest, whiles it prospers, aye believes
Its profit the chief aim of Providence.
And even death's sigil on the tomb deceives
Its vanity with plausible pretence
Of pride in nothingness, abashed no whit
To join HIC JACET to HIC INCIPIT.



XLIV.

COGITO ERGO SUM.

I.

"WHATSOEVER the names whereby men call
things,
I ponder, compare, and discriminate all things."

Whose speech? A philosopher's, say you, this?
If so, then your error is great as his.
'Twas a Grocer's Balance that spoke that speech:
His beam was rusty, his brass scales each

Bumped and bent; yet as proud he hung
 Over the cheating counter, slung
 From a bar screw'd fast to a greasy shelf,
 As if Themis had hung him aloft herself.

For, having weigh'd all things (butter-pats,
 Snuff, cloves, coffee, and salted sprats),
 And determined their gravity, great or small,
 He believed that he understood them all.

II.

"Now, man," he resumed, with himself agreeing,
 "Is an incomplete and impulsive being,
 Who, judging of things as they seem to be,
 Would misjudge them all, were it not for me.
 But his *a priori* I soon put straight
 By the solid and re-adjusting weight
 Of my *a posteriori* test.
 If at first I feel for a while oppressed
 By the force of the problem thought presents
 To my brain-pan loaded with arguments,
 Mine impulse anon is to soar above it,
 Contemplate, cogitate, calculate, prove it.
 For my reason ever inclines in me
 My will, which is for that reason free,
 To the truth, where I rest and am satisfied,
 Between the extremes upon either side.
 There the goal is gain'd, and why farther go?
 Since I know that I think, what I think I must
 know,
 And thus perfect, at last, to the point I come
 With my formula *cogito ergo sum*."

III.

Those Weights which the Balance was pleased
 to call
 His arguments, being false weights all,

Knew full well, and with secret glee,
Mock'd at the trick of the whole machine,
"For if Justice had only eyes to see,
That rogue the Grocer had long since been
Hang'd by the neck as he ought to be,"
(These False Weights sneer'd with a surly
spleen)
"And thou shouldst have served for his gallows
tree.
Thou dost think, and so art? State the truth
as it is,
Thou dost fancy thou thinkest, and thinkest
thou art.
Be it so! It costs nothing to think that or this,
And let each have his fancy. We, too, for our
part,
Have a notion 'tis worth not two penn'orth of
twine,
What thou art or thou thinkest. But spare us,
we pray,
That absurd ergotistical Ergo of thine,
Which to others must sound disobliging if they
Chance to be without thinking. For instance,
to man,
Who would surely not be what he is if he thought,
And is right; for the main thing's to be, if one
can,
And to think about being is nutshell and nought.
As for thee, if thou canst, thou canst do nothing
better
Than beget little scales, and take care that they be
Each, if possible, just like its precious begetter,
For the world's tongue is scandalous. So much
for thee!
For thine Ergo; not *cogito*, say, *ergo sum*,
But to *cogito* rather subjoin *ergo est*,
And, at least somewhat nearer the truth wilt
thou come;
To thy formula standing, but standing confessed

Sole creator of that idiotic creation
Whose silly existence exists at the best
In the depths of thine own idiotic sensation.
And then as for thy will ; it obeys the behest
Of the motive that's strongest, a slave and a
thrall

To the force we all feel and yet none of us
know.

For the rickety tile that is ready to fall
From the top of the roof if the wind blows high
And be smashed to bits in the street below,
First smashing the skull of some passer-by,
Hath a will that's as free every whit as thine
own,

And the sense not, at least, to talk nonsense
about it,

Down it falls when it must, and it lies where
'tis thrown,

By an impulse received from a pressure with-
out it.

That pressure's Necessity. What she pronounces
Finds thee, too, like others, obedient enough.

What is coffee? a pound of it weighs sixteen
ounces,

And so much, and no more, does a pound weigh
of snuff.

This alone, at the most, canst thou know after
weighing it,

And 'tis but the result of thou knowest not what.

If thou sayest it, 'tis that thou canst not help
saying it,

And thou never wilt say a thing truer than that."

IV.

Now a metal is iron as hard as nails,
Practical, patient, not easily bored :
But ideas it hates, and against them prevails,
As we often have seen, at the point of the sword

Whilst the Balance uphung 'twixt the earth and
 the sky,
 And by nature responsive to every vibration,
 Hovers vague in a realm insubstantial and
 high
 Which seems made for the purpose of pure specu-
 lation.
 So that when "sixteen ounces of snuff are a
 pound-weight,"
 The Weights cried below to the Balance above,
 Tho' he knew not, as we do, that this was un-
 sound weight,
 He replied, with a shrug, "Well, and what does
 that prove?"
 Then, convinced that he had by this interrogation
 Their materialist insolence sternly put down,
 He return'd with a tremor of self-admiration
 To the point out of which the discussion had
 grown.

v.

And so matters went on, until brought to a stop
 By a quite unforeseen and unpleasant event:
 When one day on the Grocer's iniquitous shop
 The Police made an inquisitorial descent;
 Which establish'd the fact that each weight was
 a light one,
 That the Balance had in it a tendency strong
 To incline to the side that was never the right
 one,
 And the Grocer had known of the trick all along.
 The Grocer was fined. The Police took pos-
 session
 Of the Balance and Weights. These the Law
 handed over
 To the anvil and hammer, that made an impres-
 sion
 Upon them from which they will never recover.

VI.

In one sack of old iron regardlessly shaken
Do FREE WILL and NECESSITY rust evermore.
To a different system the Grocer has taken,
And he cheats more ingeniously now than before.



XLV.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE LITTLE.

Two cousins (they were but of distant degree,
But blood's thicker than water, and each was a
Flea)

Met each other by chance. Bid not History tell
(For the goings of Fleas are inscrutable)
Whereabouts it was in their nightly walk
The dark kinsmen, meeting, fell into a talk
In the usual over-emphatic style
Of friends who, when after a long, long while
They meet unawares, in that unwill'd meeting
Evince, by a nervously-cordial greeting,
Keener care for each other's affairs
Than they honestly feel. For if one of them
wears

A threadbare coat, though as warm perhaps
As the weather in June be the breast it wraps,
At the sight of it something shuts somewhere
In the heart, like a door in a draught of air.
Now one of these two was a fine fat Flea :
To the other, a lean one, "Coz," quoth he,
In a tone of compassionate semi-suspicion,
"You seem to be terribly out of condition."
"Alas!" said the lean one, "friend, in me,
The ruin'd though innocent victim you see

Of one fatal error beyond recall.
 My means of life I invested all
 In the skin of an Ape. It was juicy and fat.
 I married in haste on the strength of that,
 Had a numerous family, daughters, sons,
 Nor was Flea ever father of fairer ones.
 Now wife and little ones, all are lost!
 Ah! had I but counted the care and cost,
 Or had I but dream'd of the danger and toil,
 When I settled first on that fertile soil!
 I confess my fault. I was taken in.
 Who could guess that an Ape has so ticklish a
 skin?

The brute was prurient, and idle too,
 With nothing better all day to do
 Than scratch, scratch, scratch; you conceive the
 despair

Of a flea whose whole livelihood hangs by a hair.
 But enough of the miseries *I* have gone thro'.
 My illustrious friend, how much better with *you*
 Has the world, since we parted, been wagging!"

"So, so!"

Complacently nodded the other. "I know
 Nothing much, on the whole, I can grumble about,
 Save a plaguy sharp twinge now and then of
 the gout.

'Tis the fruit of good fare and the life that I lead,
 Which is pleasant enough." "So it *must* be,
 indeed!"

The lean Flea said with a hungry sigh.

"But where are you living?" "Luxuriously
 With my friend the Lion." "The Lion? alack!"
 The starveling stammer'd as he skipp'd back:
 "Have, then, his terrible claws and teeth
 Their use foregone? How! dwelling beneath
 Those dread conditions, hast thou possessed
 A single moment of ease or rest?"

Scornfully smiled the superior Flea:

"What are his claws or his teeth to me?

Leonine talons may tear wild bulls,
 They cannot fidget a flea. Fear dulls,
 O foolish cousin, thy feeble wit.
 Apes scratch themselves at each itching fit,
 And in public pick out their private fleas,
 Not resenting disgust if they get but ease.
 Thine own insignificance prudently trust.
 A lion bears nobly what nobleness must.
 Of a friend's experience this maxim learn,
 And I'll warrant you, Cousin, 'twill serve your
 turn :

*From a world of foes wouldst thou live exempt?
 Then shelter thyself in the world's contempt.
 'Tis a fortune subscribed by all creatures for thee.
 Go, trade on it! safe — if thou art but a flea."*



XLVI.

MASTER AT HOME.

PART I.

IN grateful memory of each gracious reference
 Made to them by the one and thousand stories
 Of Queen Scheherazade, — or duteous deference
 To him in whom its immemorial glories
 Their realm attain'd, — the Beasts decreed thy
 name,
 Haroun Alraschid, to the bravest, best,
 And noblest of their kings — a king whose fame
 His title merited, as mightiest
 Of monarchs leonine. Nor e'er hath been
 That ancient realm so fair and flourishing
 At any time before or since, I ween,
 As when HAROUN the Illustrious was King.

That royal Lion, like his namesake, loved
To roam, incognito, his realms by night,
And if — at morn, what time it heedless roved,
Some subject's stumbling footstep chanced to
 'light

Upon a heap of bones, or bloody fleece,
Where, in the dark, the King of Beasts had
 been ;

Or if, upon the barks of drooping trees
Some Beaver's tooth, calumniously keen,
Had scored a scandalous chronicle, — what then ?

Who is exempt from scandal ? Not the great.
Are not the mighty paths of mighty men
Strewn with such ugly traces of the fate
Of little ones ? And what's a sheep or two
Lost in a lion's glory and renown ?

To his high name and famous title true,
Fear'd and revered was the great Lion
 Haroun.

But was he happy ? Whosoe'er had seen
The grace, the beauty, and the loveliness
Of the young Lioness, Haroun's fair Queen,
Could surely doubt not of the monarch's bliss :

Limbs whose luxurious and majestic mould
Seem'd by some mighty artist's magic hand
Shaped into gliding form from flexile gold ;
And, what most won the heart of all the land,

Oh, such a nameless charm of grace refined,
In every movement, queenly feminine,
Of the soft tail that, curving, swept behind,
And scarcely stirr'd a single sandgrain fine

With its light fringe, yet gave to all the rest
Expression irresistibly enchanting ;

A charm by high-born dames alone possessed.

In short, no beauty to the queen was wanting.
All female charms were hers : and she was his :

But ah ! the heart that every joy possesses
Except one joy, if that one joy it miss,

All joy in all it hath too often misses !

Oft o'er the king's majestic brow would rise
The wrinkling shadow of a secret care;
Oft o'er the orbits of his fervid eyes
The massive muscle swell'd as though it were
Stung by a sudden inward irritation;
Whilst restless swishings of the royal tail
Gave momentary tokens of vexation;
Which his proud soul allow'd not to prevail,
But, with impatient toss of the large mane,
Shook scornful off: then, with a yawn immense,
Half of submission, half of deep disdain,
Mixed with a supercilious somnolence,
The wide jaws gaped, and he, as one resign'd
To those small troubles which infest the great,
Stretch'd slow his lordly limbs. The Court
divined
The Monarch's mood: anxieties of State!
Oft at the dead of night the antler'd Hart,
Couch'd in the grass beside his spotted Doe,
From restless dreams would tremulously start,
And, heedless, strike his ornamented brow
All scared against the elm-tree's neighboring
bark;
When from the far-off, deep-porch'd palace,
borne
Along the listening silence of the dark,
Fierce cries of royal wrath and passionate
scorn,
And then the roaring fall, and heavy roll
Of mighty ones with mighty ones contending,
Startled the poor stag's palpitating soul;
His straddled slender legs beneath him bending.
His spouse, too, hearing what he heard, half rose,
Scared for a moment by that ominous sound:
But, when her glance fell on the hornèd brows
Of her good helpmate conjugally crown'd,

She, with a slight toss of her dainty head,
(Significant of pacified alarm)
Settled again to sleep in her soft bed
Safe hid among the forest herbage warm.
And when, next morn, the Monarch sat in Hall,
His mien was sombre and his mood irate,
Matted and torn his mane, and swollen all
His mighty limbs. Anxieties of State!

PART II.

The lordly Lion Haroun one day
Beneath a shady wood,
A solitary lounge lay
In meditative mood.
From public cares retired,
But not from care released,
Of life, and all things, tired,
The noble-minded beast
Oft sadly sigh'd, the while he eyed
The summer grass and flowers;
And, sighing, heard each happy bird
That piped from pleasant bowers
To gratulate its brooding mate
On June's unclouded hours.
Then forth there came, from out of a vine
That round an elm did range
Her garlands green and globes of wine,
A little creature strange.

It was of the Monarch's million
Loyal subjects, doubtless, one.
But never before that minute
Had the Monarch noticed the little creature;
Uncouth of form, minute of feature,
And yet, with something in it
That seem'd to strike and harmonize
With the cause of the Monarch's moody sighs;

And the Lion's eye-glance tarried
On the pinnacled house, with its painted face,
Which, at a slow and a solemn pace,
The Snail on his shoulders carried.

Doubtless that tiny householder
Guess'd not what kingly eye
Did on his movements then confer
Its royal scrutiny.

For on, with smooth important motion,
He paced, as though he had a notion
That he was lord of all the way.
His house upon his back he bore,
And on his forehead standards four:
Erect and proud were they.
To him (thus travelling leisurely,
Unconscious of the Lion's eye)
Across the path made haste
Another, smaller, wayfarer,
Swifter-footed, swarthier,
And slim about the waist.
Then these two mutes, perceiving each
The other, in their native speech
Did one another hail,
And with familiar salutation
Fell into close confabulation,
The Emmet and the Snail.

Haroun, the Lion, understood
(As all good sovereigns do, or should)
The dialects and languages
Of his provincial subjects fully.
And, glad to escape the weary stress
Of thoughts morose and melancholy
Which did just then his mind oppress,
He hail'd with silent satisfaction
The chance of finding some distraction

In listening to the chatterings
Of such small folk, on such small things
As cabbage-leaves and pips of pine,
And weather-changes, foul or fine;
In short, each ordinary matter
Of such folk's ordinary chatter.

PART III.

The little Emmet shook his head :
“ O Caracol ! O Caracol ! *
I would not be the King,” he said,
“ In such bad times.” (With prescient soul
Haroun the Lion prick'd an ear.)
“ Why, neighbor, why ? ” said Caracol.
“ Ah, Caracol ! ah, gossip dear,”
The little Emmet still ran on,
“ You stay-at-home, you'll live and die,
Not dreaming what great things are done
In the great world. But, gossip, I
Go gadding here and there, you know,
And many a thing upon the sly
I pick up that's worth knowing.” “ How ! ”
Quoth Caracol, “ good gossip say,
(I am, indeed, a perfect stranger
To what you hint at,) tell me, pray,
Is, then, the Empire now in danger ?
From what ? Explain, friend, if you know,
Domestic brawl, or foreign foe ?
A puissant King have we ! ”
“ No, Caracol — I'll tell you — no,
From civic brawl, and foreign foe,
The Empire still is free.
But, ah ! dear gossip, if you knew,
You never said a thing less true —
The King's *not* puissant.” — “ He !

* The Spanish for snail is here used as a proper name.

What mean you, friend?" said Caracol.
(Haroun suppress'd a scornful growl.)

"I mean — upon my life,

'Tis true," the Emmet said, "the King
Can rule his states — rule every thing,
But his unruly wife.

The King's not master of the Queen:
She masters him. And this I mean,

That, master'd by his spouse,
At home he is not puissant — nay,
Not even — the plain truth to say —
At home in his own house.

I know a secret gallery
All thro' the palace ('tis thereby

I pick up odds and ends.)

Ah, if you knew what goings on!
What shocking, shocking things are done,

What hosts of private friends
The Queen receives upon the sly!

Poor King! I'm sure I pity him."

Said Caracol, "And so do I!"

The Snail's small optic nerve was dim
With sympathetic moisture. "Why,"
Sigh'd Caracol, "what's, after all,
Such greatness worth?" The Emmet small

Resumed, "Without rebuff

We rule, friend, you and I, our spouses,
Nor fear to enter our own houses.

Abroad, the King, indeed, looks great:
All envy him his power and state.

At home, he's small enough!

"O Caracol! my Caracol!

I would not, trust me, for the whole

Broad realm that he calls his,
Be that unhappy King." "Nor I!"

Said Caracol with glistening eye:

"My house my castle is.

And, gossip, you and I can say
 (What, ah! *he* cannot) day by day,
 Tho' not in palace dome,
 On purple couch, but humble bed,
 Each lays his undishonor'd head,
 'Master am I at home!'

PART IV.

Roaring with wrath and outraged pride,
 Haroun, the lordly Lion, sprung.
 The little Emmet slipp'd aside,
 And hid himself the grass among.
 The Snail, who could not go so quick,
 Pull'd his four timorous standards down,
 Swallow'd himself, and (terror-sick)
 Was to a mere saliva grown.

The royal Lion, in its base distress,
 The wretched creature saw,
 He could have crushed it into nothingness
 With one stroke of his paw.
 In a cold sweat lay Caracol. No doubt,
 Master at home was he.
 But master *of* his home, he now found out,
 'Twas harder far to be.

Howbeit, happily for Caracol,
 Haroun the Lion, with a lion's whim,
 Or else a monarch's scornful self-control,
 Pass'd onward, musing, and so harm'd not him.
 "A worm," the Lion mused, "an abject clot
 Of animated slime, that creeps infirm,
 Is lord in his own house . . . and I am not?
 Well . . . be it so! The worm is still a worm.
 I am a king. Bah! . . . burrow and crawl . . .
 become

One with this earth's obscurest denizens,
 To be . . . as they are . . . each in his own home
 Master . . . of what? mere subterranean dens,

Or flimsy tenements . . . where they abide,
This — a sick jelly without even a spine,
That — a grimed drudge? ” And the great Lion
sigh’d
Sadly . . . “ O Leontine ! O Leontine ! ”



XLVII.

THE PLANE AND THE PENKNIFE.

A LITTLE Penknife, with sore toil and pain,
In unskill'd hands, was desperately trying
To smooth a great rough plank against the grain.
“ Cease, little fool ! ” that frustrate labor
spying,

A Plane exclaim'd, “ I'll show thee how to do it ! ”
And galloping up and down, he raced
Nimble along the plank, as tho' he knew it,
And found the rough work pleasant to his
taste.

Like curdling foam, small shavings here and
there
Bubbled ; and where the swift Plane flitted o'er
The hard wood, waxing bald, its shaven hair
In yellow ringlets floated to the floor ;

Leaving reveal'd, in delicate design,
The section'd surface of each wavy vein
And rosin-color'd ring with fringes fine.
Then, proudly pausing, “ There now ! ” cried
the Plane.

"How shall I ever thank thee, friend, enough?"

The Penknife, much admiring, made reply,
And from his tender blade some notches rough
He wiped, like teardrops from a grateful eye.

"Thou shalt not thank me, little fool, at all;
But do thy proper work as I do mine,"

The Plane in accents magisterial
Said to the Penknife. "Carve thou figures fine

"In lucid maple; or, at most, essay
Thy tender tooth on the ambitious box,
That deems himself as brave, in his own way,
As elephantine ivory. On blocks

"Of his unfeatured flesh do thou engrave
Rare pictures delicate with dainty lines.
To beautify some poet's gentle page,
Or solace Science with mysterious signs :

"Or round about some richly-foliaged frame
Wreath, rope, and cherub, sculpture, gay with
gold,
To enshrine the image of a high-born dame
Limn'd by the painter's peerless art of old.

"For this thou *canst* do, and this cannot I.
And in our family the rule holds good,
That each must do his best to justify
Steel's born superiority to wood.

"The Axe, our father, in the forest wages
Stout battle with the centenary oaks;
And they, the giants of a hundred ages,
Sink groaning underneath his sturdy strokes.

"Ho! ho! the crash, when the old warrior goes
In at them, and their rattling harness, plied
By his reiterated ponderous blows,
Bursts into fagots! That is iron's pride.

“The Saw, our mother, when she’s set agoing
Goes thro’ it bravely, with a right good will.
Once let her show her teeth, and there’s no
knowing
What dust she’ll make about her in the mill.

“The lazy trees that lounged about the wood
And scarce bestirr’d themselves the whole day
long,
She turns to trusty planks for service good.
I, the strong firstborn of our parents strong,

“Less strong than they are, am yet strong
enough
To finish the good work by them begun.
Too tender *thou* art for such labor tough.
Thou, brother, thou, the old couple’s youngest
son,

“Since strength thou hast for nothing else, be
thou
At least an artist. We are of the few
Born each, to make a mark i’ th’ world, and show
There’s metal in us. To thy birth be true.”

MORAL.

Plain-spoken the Plane is,
And somewhat o’erweening;
But noble his strain is,
Since noble its meaning.

Noble utility
Only is able
To boast the nobility
Praised in this fable.

XLVIII.

THE DRAG AND THE WHEEL.

I.

CLICK! clack! with a whoop and a whack!
The way is white, and the woods are black.
Thro' glare and gloom, now in now out,
What are the dust and noise about?
In the cloud o' the dust, in the clear o' the day,
What is it comes from the hills this way,
Creaking, reeking, heavy and hot,
Downward, townward? What is it? What?

II.

The road is steep from the mountain-tops:
Zigzag, lower and lower, it drops,
Slanting, sidling, fantastically
Down to the inn by the brook in the valley;
Whence it runs straight as a road can run,
Half in the shadow and half in the sun.

III.

Rumbling, grumbling, lumbering slow,
With a hi-gee-up! and a hi-gee-wo!
In the white o' the dust, in the heat o' the day,
'Tis a loaded wagon that comes this way.
And its heavily-harness'd horses four
Pant and smoke as they stop at the door
Of the roadside inn to rest them a while;
For the team, since morn, hath been many a
mile.

IV.

While the grooms were giving the horses drink,
The wagoner loosen'd the ponderous link,

Lifted the glowing Drag, and again
Hung him up by his iron chain
Behind the wagon, 'twixt wheel and wheel.

V.

That Drag was shodden with stoutest steel;
But his rusty shoe was half worn away
By the flinty ruts which had day by day
Been rubbing him bare, as, clutching it still,
He carried his wagon-load safe down hill.

VI.

So now, as he swung there high and dry,
"Ouf!" groan'd he, "what a drudge am I!
'Tis a pretty sort of a life I lead!
Bearing the burden and staying the speed
Of a wagon with ten good loads at least
Of timber atop! each stupid beast
Tugging away the more for me,
And the stupid wheel, with its bandy knee
Dug into my ribs, still doing its best
To be turning round when it ought to rest!
And what reward have I had of it yet?
Do good to others, small thanks you get!
For, look at these useless Wheels here (nay,
Useless, said I? far worse are they!)
If they had their will they would soon upset
Wagon, and timber, and all! And yet
Tho' the wagon is saved by my wise prevention,
It is only they that receive attention.
Do their spokes fall out? they are reinstated.
Do their axles creak? they are lubricated,
Greased, and eased, and coax'd to be quiet.
Do their tires fall off? they get new ones by it,
And go braced with a brand-new iron band,
Brave as (bright arm'd by his lady's hand)
Some knight sallies forth to the tournament,
Whiles I, each bone of whose back is bent

In their service, wearing myself away,
Get never a thank-you night or day,
For the care without which (woe is me!)
Soon would the wagon in pieces be."

VII.

One of the Wheels to the Drag replied:
"Moderate, prithee, thy boastful pride,
Thou who dost moderate other folk's speed,
Doing nought else in the world, indeed!
Times (I acknowledge it) now and then
Happen to us, as they happen to men,
When our virtues are, for a while, defects.
But 'tis so with the world's best intellects;
And those times are rare. I have heard men say
There be water-wagons, whose perilous way
Is over the sea. When it blows great gales,
Their wagoners then take in the sails,
And throw out the anchor; putting the drag on,
And stopping the wheels of the water-wagon.
But say, are the sails no use at sea?
Is the anchor the sole thing needed? We
Are as good by land as, by sea, the sails:
And, as good as the anchor is for the gales,
Is the Drag for the hill-sides — going down.
But the gales and the hills are exceptions, own!
To each his merit; but none need brag.
More often the Wheel is of use than the Drag,
As you'll see in a minute."

VIII.

The beasts were fed:
The wagoner jump'd on the wagon, and said,
"All right!" and away, with no fear of a fall,
Started the wagon, and horses and all,
At a brisk merry trot o'er the long low road
That wound thro' the valley, so smooth and
broad.

The dust flew up, and the sparks flew out,
 The wagoner smack'd his whip with a shout,
 "Hu! hu!" and the wheels went round:
 'Twas a pleasure to see them get over the
 ground.

IX.

Their motion, mockingly, made the Drag
 Like a pendulum this way and that way wag.
 He seem'd, with a shrug of contempt, to say,
 "Prithee
 Go along, silly world, and the Devil go with thee!
 Hustle me! juggle me! flout me still!
 My turn will come — at the turn of the hill."

X.

He was right. His turn came round at last:
 And pass'd away — when the hill was past.



XLIX.

A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL.

PART I.

I.

"BLIND, blind is fate! unjust and hard my lot,
 Who bear the burden of oblivious days
 Unnoticed and uncheer'd from spot to spot
 By dull and difficult ways!
 How enviably doth the blissful bird
 Bathe her free life in sunshine and sweet air,
 Forth's lightest elements, and undeterr'd
 Roam the wide welkin! There

Sublime she wanders with delighted mind
Thro' heaven's high glories — I but guess, de-
barr'd
From contemplation of them. Fate is blind,
Unjust my lot, and hard !”

II.

Thus, tired by slow and weary pilgrimage
Along a short, smooth, easy road, complain'd
A Tortoise ; resting ere the last long stage
To his near goal was gain'd.
Head, feet, and tail i' the dust, he lay spread out
Self-crucified, a star that no light gave.
Deep-buried in himself, he bore about
His own life's living grave.
Yet dream'd he ever of a great existence,
Where, in lone lorddom over sea and land,
Sun-crown'd and girdled with the azure distance
The monarch mountains stand.

III.

Then suddenly the ambitious dreamer found
His sordid life uplifted. Like his mind
Sublime his body soar'd. His native ground
Sank as he rose i' the wind.
And underneath the wide world opens round him.
The silvery windings of the waters shine
Like little sinuous snakes. No limits bound him
Save the broad heavens divine.
The sprawling woods that seem'd immeasurable
Clump themselves into definite dark shapes.
The light green meadows lengthen. Skyward
swell
Gray curves of mountain capes.
Deep in cold hollows of extinguished fire
Sleep the intense blue tarns. Sharp points of
snow
Glitter, and valleys green with ice-fields, higher
Than other green things grow.

The pure caress of airs, tho' keen not harsh,
Cool in the calm of that ethereal height
Fan the delighted dweller of the marsh,
Thrill'd by unwonted flight.
A second Ganymede some second Jove,
Seeking for beauty here on earth misknown,
In him hath haply found, and borne above
To the Olympian Throne.
So deem'd the dupe of his own blind ambition,
And cried, "O my prophetic soul, at last
The Gods repent! Accepting Fate's contrition,
I do forgive the past."

PART II.

I.

And tho', indeed, no Ganymede
The beast was, yet 'tis true
That Jove's own bird on him conferr'd
This god-like point of view.
For, as of old, some bandit bold,
Balk'd of his promised prey
(The Bishop's self with bags of pelf)
Might grumbling bear away
The Bishop's Fool whose limping mule
Belated lags behind,
So, missing aim at nobler game,
An Eagle chanced to find
The torpid beast; unfit to feast
His Eaglet brood, but still
A trifling toy which they, for joy
And not for food, might kill.

II.

As in the Eagle's claw
The Tortoise upward sail'd,
His flight a Swallow saw,
And, "O beware!" she wail'd,

“Against thy nature’s law
Why hast thou rashly rail’d?
Poor denizen of dust,
Confide not in the fate
Which doth exalt, and must
Destroy, thee soon or late.
Be warn’d in time: mistrust
The contact of the great.”
“Error!” that dupe replied.
“The patron who in me
My latent genius spied
Respects it, tho’ it be
By unjust gods denied
What they bestow’d on thee.
Thanks to his recognition,
I lack no longer now
The long-desired condition
Which gives to such as thou
Their freedom, and position
Above the world. I know
That on the restoration
To me, and to my race,
Of that exalted station
Which we were born to grace,
Depends the whole creation.
Till then all’s out of place.”

PART III.

I.

And, tho’ his listener long ago was gone,
And to the empty air he spoke alone,
Still he continued, with important tone.

II.

“Scorn not the form by dædal ages made
For my adornment and the world’s devotion,
In symbol of the fixed foundation laid
For the world’s motion!

The first word of creation was Testudo,
 And all was in the word. My sire grandæval
 Bore on his back (as easily as you do
 Chafer or weevil
 In beak or claw) the elephant gigantic,
 Who bore the whole world's weight upon his
 own.
 Wild Change, the revolutionary antic,
 Was then unknown;
 Then, based on principle, the world stood fast;
 And when the changing world to changeless me
 Repentant turns, then all shall rest at last
 Where all should be.
 You others are as wanton as the weather,
 Respecting nought. But truth survives neglect.
 I wait, and hug myself, and keep together
 My self-respect.
 Who knows? The old Saturnian times return.
 Order I bring, and peace, to earth again,
 When tipsy Fortune from her tilted urn
 Shakes down" . . .

Just then

His evil star, on which he had not reckon'd,
 Wink'd, and a Hare into the open beckon'd.
 The Eagle spied the tempting prey,
 Unclasp'd his claws, and, well-a-day!
 As swift as crash
 Succeeds to flash,
 When thunder-clouds together clash,
 A swooning fall, a sounding smash!
 And on the earth, it was his vain
 Tho' brave ambition to sustain,
 Shatter'd the Tortoise lay.

PART IV.

The friend that warn'd him in his hour of pride
 His downfall spied.
 The modest bird, with fondly flutter'd breast,
 Flew to the nest

Which she, who throws in sport o'er sea and land
 (Beneath it spann'd)
The airy bridge so exquisitely light .
 Of her bold flight,
Builds, safely shelter'd under low-thatch'd eaves,
 Of clay and leaves.
There did she mourn, "Mistaken aspiration
 Is self-damnation.
He who himself hath misappreciated,
 Is twice ill-fated.
For what his nature never may attain
 He pines in vain,
Whilst in his natural home, whate'er it be,
 A stranger he!
Ah, hadst thou known the world as well as I,
 Ne'er from on high
Wouldst thou have fallen, but hadst lived content
 As nature meant.
Thee doth desire impel to thine unrest,
 Me to my nest."

L.

THE ROSE AND THE BRAMBLE.

THERE was a garden — no matter where —
The world is full of such gardens. There
Flowers of all color and odor grew ;
And, whatever their odor, whatever their hue,
The gardener gave to them each alike
What for each was good. In congenial ground
He set each seedling to shoot and strike ;
Each sprout he cherish'd and water'd round
With the selfsame vigilance everywhere,
Tended each bud with the selfsame care ;

And, nevertheless, in color and scent,
They came up, all of them, different.
Each had something that best became it:
Each had some quality fair and fit:
Each had a beauty whereby to name it:
Each had a merit to praise in it.
One by its leaf, and one by its stem,
This by its color, and that by its smell,
These by their blossomy diadem,
And those by their fruit, did the rest excel.
But when that garden was open'd, those
Who walk'd there, turn'd, as they wander'd by,
With one accord to admire the Rose;
And the rest of the flowers could guess not why.
For "Each flower's a flower," they all averr'd,
"And the Rose is *only* a flower we know."

Now the praise bestow'd on the Rose most stirr'd
The surprise of a Bramble that happen'd to grow
Quite close to the Rose. And he said, "We
have grown,
Since we were seeds in the same soil sown,
Ever together, the Rose and I;
And I never could find out yet, I own,
What there is in her to catch men's eye.
However, next Spring it shall be my duty
To find the Rose's secret out."

The Bramble felt not the Rose's beauty,
And he thought, "'Tis her manner of growing,
no doubt.
One has but to notice and do the same."

So the Bramble, as soon as the next Spring came,
Noticed; and saw that the Rose's stem
Was all cover'd with thorns; and "Oh ho!"
quoth he,
"'Tis the thorns that do it! But we'll beat *them*,
And the world shall see what the world shall see."

Then, by checking the natural circulation
Of his proper sap in a few May morns,
The Bramble, ambitious of admiration,
To imitate Roses put forth thorns.
Yet still, as before, to admire the Rose
The folk pass'd by him. "Good folks," cried he,
"These thorns of mine are more sharp than those
That roughen the rosebush. Turn, and see!"
But nobody heard what the Bramble cried,
Or a passing glance of approval cast him.
Then, to catch the notice, the Bramble tried,
By catching the skirts, of all who pass'd him.

Which attempt succeeded too well, indeed.
For the folk then noticed the Bramble, crying,
"Gardener, away with this troublesome weed,
Which tears our clothes!" And the gardener,
 spying

The cause of complaint, "Not in all my life
Was I ever disgraced before," he said,
"By such a sad eyesore!" whipping his knife
Out of his pocket; and soon, half dead,
With his feelers all by the roots uptorn,
On the other side of the garden wall
Was the luckless Bramble flung forlorn,
To fare as he might there, thorns and all.

The Bramble ruefully shook his head,
And "What in the world does it mean?" he said.
"May I be blighted if I can see
What the difference is 'twixt the Rose and me!
One thing alone have I understood:
That what in a Bramble is taken ill
In a Rose is reckon'd all fair and good.
But the reason why is a mystery,
And of vying with Roses I've had my fill."

Then the Bramble crawl'd away to the wood:
And there in the wood you may find him still.

LI.

DUCUNT VOLENTEM FATA: NOLENTEM
TRAHUNT.

I.

A MAN, who lack'd even means to make amends
By health and hope for lack of wealth and
friends,

Having no tie to life save pain's harsh tether,
Resolved to end both pain and life together;
And leaped into a river to fulfil

That woful purpose; when, against his will,
Another man, rich, happy, hopeful, young,
Whilst listening to the bridal bells that rung
Blithe recognition of his marriage morn,

Fell into the same river. Both were borne
Adown the stream; whose wave, indifferent
To different causes, rolling onward went
To reach the same effect; regardless which
It drown'd the first, the poor man or the rich.

II.

A Sage, who happen'd to be passing by,
And saw those two men drowning, was thereby
Thrown into a long train of thoughts, profound
And rapid as that river. At one bound,

The recollection that he could not swim
Came in the first thought that occur'd to him.

The second from the first as swiftly flow'd
As wave from wave, and, by reflection, show'd,
Concerning those two miserable men,

Who to their deaths were drifting close in ken,
That, if he tried to help them, there might be,
Instead of only two drown'd bodies, three.

His third thought was, that 'twas no use at all
To run in search of aid, or even call,

Since, long ere aid could reach them, even if
found,

The wretches must infallibly be drown'd.

His fourth thought, which at once he acted on,
As being the sole thing proper to be done

Without delay, was to elucidate

To these two victims of the force of fate

Fate's ways, by force of prudent precept. Now,

Tho' how to swim he knew not, he knew how

To talk in Latin. That was his profession.

And, (being himself in safe and sound possession

Of all his wits) as loud as he was able,

He, in the words which introduce this Fable,

"*Ducunt volentem fata*," with a shout,

"*Nolentem trahunt*," from the bank bawl'd out.

III.

And was it chance, or was it intuition?

Vast were the treasures of his erudition;

But from the stores of truths which he possess'd

(The one half serving to refute the rest)

That Sage, by dint of long and deep reflection,

Could not have made a luckier selection,

For, whilst Philosophy thus took her stand

Calm, as became her, upon good firm land,

The truth which she proclaim'd, (put out no
whit

By plentiful cold water pour'd on it)

Her influence proved; awakening there and then

In the damp'd spirits of those drowning men,

This thought: that, if Fate treats the selfsame
way

The willing and unwilling, whether they

Resist or yield, the end's the same end still,

And bootless both, to will or not to will.

Its next result inverted that conviction,

Proving the force of truth by contradiction,

Philosophy's chief triumph! Thus, the first
 Of those two men, who, with a will athirst
 For sudden watery annihilation,
 Had jump'd into the river, — tho' natation
 Was not to him an art unknown, forewent it,
 Letting his body, as the current sent it,
 Drift will-less down the water, and from *volens*
 Became, comparatively speaking, *nolens*.
 The other, who was in the same position
 Against his will, exerting strong volition,
 Tax'd all his wits to compensate to him
 The sad chance of not knowing how to swim;
 Call'd to his mind the bride who now no doubt
 Was wondering what her bridegroom was about,
 Imag'd her loss in his; and, fortified
 By fond emotions, strove against the tide
 With such a vigorous valor, that at length
 He reach'd, and caught, and clutch'd with all
 his strength,
 The lean arm of a weeping willow tree;
 Which o'er the water stoop'd, and seem'd to be
 Already making solemn preparation
 For his appropriate funeral oration.
 Tho' much it wept, the willow's nerves were
 strong:
 The man, meanwhile, cried lustily and long.
 And, since 'twas not in Latin that he cried,
 But that plain language everywhere employ'd
 By living creatures to express joy, pain,
 Or need, a ploughman on the neighboring plain
 Heard him; and, understanding from the sound
 That some one was unwilling to be drown'd,
 Ran to the rescue.

IV.

Much at the same time

The first man floated to a bank of slime
 Insensible, and stuck there: by and by
 Came to himself again: sprawl'd up: shook dry

His dripping rags: and, as the latest word
 Which, ere his senses left him, he had heard
 Was said in Latin, shivering as he dried him,
 The wretch sigh'd ruefully "*Non bis in idem!*"
 Then clamber'd to the shore with trailing tread,
 Slunk home, and sank, unsupper'd, into bed. —
 There, long in miserable plight he lay,
 Rack'd by an aguish fever night and day.
 But, since he could not pay the doctor's fees,
 Gratis the man recover'd by degrees.
 And now, one miracle another follow'd;
 For by the last disease the first was swallow'd,
 Just as one nail drives out another one.
 Feeling his health and strength restored, anon,
 Ere he set out in search of work, the man
 To brush and clean his sand-caked clothes began.
 When, lo you, yet another miracle!
 The best of all. For, glittering as they fell,
 The grains of sand that off his garments roll'd
 Were mixed with grains of veritable gold.
 The poor man sought the well-remember'd bank
 Which for his cold, and gold, he had to thank.
 'Twas all auriferous. He tested it,
 But kept the secret — and the gold, till bit
 By bit a little capital he got.
 Therewith the bank he bought, and on the spot
 Built workshops, hiring out of many a land
 Workmen to wash the wealth from that rare sand.
 Plenteous the profit was, since pure the gold.
 And thus the man, at last, grew rich — and old.

v.

One day, came, footsore, from a distant Shire
 A workman asking work. Well worth his hire
 The stranger proved. A sober man was he,
 Hard-working, honest. Tho' he seem'd to be
 By something nobly mournful in his mien
 For better fortunes born, yet staid, serene,

And silent, he his daily taskwork plied.
 With curious gaze full oft the master eyed
 This stranger: whom one day, when work was
 done,

He sought, and, at the setting of the sun,
 Found by the river bank, with tearful eye
 Watching a willow tree that wept thereby.
 "Thou sufferest, honest friend?" the good man
 cried.

"I, too, have suffer'd. Trust me." Faintly sigh'd
 The other (answering not) "O willow tree
Ducunt volentem fata . . . woe is me . . .
Nolentem trahunt!" Much surprised to hear
 Those words, once heard before with drowning
 ear,

The master ask'd, and learn'd, at last, what we
 Already know. With this much more: that she
 For whose sake this poor wretch had saved his life
 That life had fill'd with misery, shame, and strife,
 And at the last had left him, leaving not,
 To reconcile him to his ruin'd lot,
 Fortune or friends. Thus had he lived to hate
 That luckless hour when he, at strife with fate,
 Had won the victory. "Friend, forget the past!"
 The master cried. "In mine a home thou hast.
 Nor wife have I, nor children. Be mine heir.
 Who art mine only kinsman, I declare.
 For kinsfolk of a sort we needs must be,
 Two fishes out of the same water, we!"
 Then, when the other hesitated, "Nay,"
 He added, laughing, "Fate will have her way.
 So, *nolens volens*, it must needs be so.
 Shake hands upon it. There's no saying no,
 When Fate saith ay."

VI.

Conversing thus, the two
 Whom Fate so strangely had united now

By land, as once by water, by and by
 Bethought them of the Sage who from on high,
 When each was floundering in the flood below,
 Had graciously vouchsafed to let them know
 A truth; which he, for the occasion, took
 From Seneca; who stole it from the book
 Of some Greek Poet; who had borrow'd it
 From some one else; to whom some other Wit
 Had lent it first. So, forth the two friends set
 To find the Sage to whom they owed this debt.
 Him, after fruitless search for many a day,
 They found, when he was being borne away
 To his last resting-place.

Where, as 'tis fit,

This story also ends. No fable it;
 Albeit not on that account a fact;
 Since every fable must have to it tacked
 Some sort of moral. But such tales as these
 May serve for morals, if their readers please,
 To all those fabulous things which so confound
 us
 By really happening in the world around us.



LII.

SUUM CUIQUE.

I.

It was the hour when woods are cold,
 And there is no color in all the sky,
 Because night's blue is gone, and the gold
 O' the dawn not coming till by and by:
 It was the hour when vapors white
 Are over the dark mere rolling slow
 From the brewage brew'd by the water-sprite
 Who inhabits the sunless deeps below.

II.

In the reed and rush, 'twixt mere and fen,
 Two wild white Swans were fighting then;
 For a wild white Swan-Bride fighting keen;
 The lake's two lords for the lake's one queen.
 And altho' both woo'd her, but one could wed,
 And but one be victor, tho' both fought well.
 And the vanquisht warrior, wounded, fled
 From the wrath of his rival peer, and
 fell,
 Over the reed-fenced rivage damp,
 Into the filth of the fenny swamp;
 Whence the sound of his funeral hymn rose clear
 From the marsh to the woodland, and over the
 mere.

III.

Thro' the reeds he crushes, from the forest rushes
 The bristly bulk of the fierce Wild Boar;
 Crashing down bud and bush, pashing the mud
 and slush,
 And scattering filth from his cleft feet four.
 And "Who is it that calleth for help?" quoth he.
 "Here, all who enter my subjects be.
 Let the wronger beware! and, if fight he can,
 Fight for his life, or fly with speed!
 Eh, . . . but, bless my bristles! . . . a Swan?
 And, if I mistake not, a Swan indeed!
 Welcome, Cousin! Allow me, pray,
 To ask what weather blew *you* this way?
 Or is it, O lord of the lucid lake,
 (Thou stateliest swimmer!) that thy white neck
 Is weary of watching each snowy flake
 Of its whiteness imaged without a speck
 In the over-perfect purity
 And tedious calm of the crystal flood?
 And hast *thou*, too, learn'd, at last, to sigh
 For the common, but more congenial, mud?"

Hah ! by each buffalo's cloven crest
 In the herd of them put to flight by me,
 I swear (for I love thee, noble guest !)
 I will share mine acorn crops with thee,
 If thou, contented, a swine with swine,
 Wilt change those too-white plumes of thine
 For the bristles and hair
 We hogs do wear.
 Already, thy haughty beauty wanes !
 Fallen, tho' unresign'd, art thou.
 And the spurted slime of the fen's drench
 stains
 That princely bosom of spotless snow.
 Thou that immaculate swamnest the mere,
 Wallow in mud, and be welcome, here ! ”

IV.

Bleeding, aching, weary, and wan,
 Bitterly listen'd the noble swan
 To those brutal words ; and “ O shame and grief ! ”
 He moan'd, “ that in such a place — to me —
 And with such a speech — the ignoble chief
 Of an obscene herd should dare to proffer
 His fulsome friendship filthy and free,
 And a swan be shamed by a swinish offer ! ”

V.

With failing breath,
 On the threshold of death,
 By an effort vast
 (His saddest and last)
 He arose ; and, quickly
 Stanching his wound
 With the grasses sickly
 That grow on such ground,
 Sprang forward ; crying
 “ St. Pelican !
 I die ; but, in dying,
 Am still a swan !

St. Pelican, hear me,
 And grant my cry !
 In death be near me,
 And let me die
 As I lived, at least,
 A swan, not a beast,
 In mine own pure element's purity ! ”

VI.

The Saint reprieved him.
 The wave received him,
 And, washing the stain from each wounded
 limb,
 On his deathbed bathed and rebaptized him.

VII.

Then, backward turning his stately head,
 On the haunts of those he had scorn'd and fled
 He gazed ; and saw with a dying eye
 Afar in the forest the filthy herd,
 Profaning its sacred groves, rush by ;
 And the mirth of the wallowing monsters
 heard.
 And “ Each to his own ! ” the Wild Swan said,
 “ And his own to each ! and I to mine !
 As the Swan to his purity, so to his bed
 In the mud he was born for, returneth the
 Swine.
 For, if a Swan fall in the filth of the fen
 Where the dew turns slime and the green
 grows sallow,
 And even the strong foot slips, what then ?
 He doth but fall where the Swine doth wallow.
Suum cuique,
 To live or die :
Hic et ubique
 A Swan am I ! ”

LIII.

THE TWO TRAVELLERS;

OR,

LOVE AND DEATH.

WE are not made for Beauty, nor for Love,
Nor for Eternity,
Perchance. But something in us, from above,
Yearns to embrace all three.

Lost in a silent land of winter wild,
Where, warming nothing, yet on all things
smiled

The eternal snows that lit that lonesome land,
Two weary travellers wander'd, staff in hand,
Over the frozen hills. Fast friends, together
They two had fared thro' fortune's changing
weather;
And each had loved; and each life's common
chance

Had cursed with war 'twixt love and circum-
stance.

But in that conflict, one to love, that claim'd,
Had yielded, all: whilst one life's fate had
freed

From love's embrace; and, struggling forward,
maim'd

In every feeling, saved, not all, indeed,
But all mere life hath left when love is dead,
And dead, with love, life's sense of lovely
things.

Now, as they wander'd weary, round them spread
(To make more weary still their wanderings)
Endless tranquillity. And all the while
Above them, and about them, everywhere
Along the land and in the leafless air,

Throughout that region of unblest repose
They felt the fixed unsympathizing smile
Of the eternal snows.

It was the smile of Eternity,
That smileth, whether men live or die.
Every sorrow, and every joy,
Every pleasure, and every pain,
Hath something — it may be, all — to dread.
But, with nothing to lose, and nothing to gain,
Eternity smileth the smile of the dead.

“I have seen the Sphinx in the Desert,” said
To his fellow-pilgrim one of the twain,
“And the smile upon Nature’s face, methinks,
Is as the smile on the face of the Sphinx:
The smile of indifference! Death smiles so,
And so smiles Love — on the loss and woe
That waste the hearts of his human prey
When, having o’erwhelm’d them, he passeth away
As they sink in dust, to smile down forever
From his unattainable heaven so high
On the generations, whose foil’d endeavor
Cannot interpret, however it try,
Nor answer, save by a feverish sigh,
That inscrutable smile, with its unsad Never!
For Love is Love, for aye, as of old:
And, Spring by Spring, as the leaves unfold,
Lives shall blossom in Love’s strong sun
That beameth for all, and abideth for none.
But Life is mortal, tho’ Love be not,
And Death is, was, and shall be.
And Nature heeds not her children’s lot,
A wanton mother is she!
Friend, I am tired, and can no farther fare.
Here will I rest.” — “Ah, madman!” cried the
other,
“Here is but Ruin with Rest’s face. Beware!
Shake off this fatal lethargy, my brother!

'Tis Death that wooes, and not Repose,
The weary and unwise
To his cold couch in these deep snows.
Poor wretch, arouse! arise!
Some succor, sure, must be at hand,
Some issue from this dreadful land.
For lo! where leans yon woodland high
Along the windless air,
Some woodman's hut methinks I spy,
Or charcoal-burner's rude repair,
A smoke is in the frosty sky.
Deliverance must be near!"
"Ah, brother, prithee let me be,"
His comrade answer'd. "Whither flee?
Deliverance! . . . dost thou seek it? See,
'Tis at our feet—'tis here!"

And, as he spake, he sank. With a shrill cry
The other turn'd, and fled: from peak to peak
Springing, and clinging, dizzily, foot and hand.
The upland forest, heavy, huge, and high,
Seem'd slipping o'er him from its icy shelves.
And, wildly mocking the man's human shriek,
With most inhuman revelry,
Outleaped the echoes of that lonesome land,
Like mad malignant elves.

O'er the giddy steeps he climbs, he leaps,
And his breath is salt with blood.
And there's blood in the skies—or blood in his
eyes—
As, with reeling steps, and choking cries,
And broken strength, he reaches, at length,
The Woodman's hut in the wood.
And his voice doth seem like a voice in a dream
When he shouts and beats at the Woodman's door.
Faint and blind as a wasted wind
That beats its life out, trying to find
Its lost way over a moor.

“ Ope, Woodman! ope
For charity!
Help! help! a rope,
A hand! Hard by
On the nether slope
Doth my comrade lie,
Lost, if no hope
Of help be nigh,
For I can no more.
Wake, Woodman! wake,
And open the door
For Jesu’s sake!”

“ Come hither! come hither!” the Woodman
cried

To his four sons, “ and bear him inside,
And pile him a bearskin bed,
And cut the boots from his swollen feet.
These famished pulses feebly beat,
But the poor wretch is not dead.”
So the Foresters chafed him, limb by limb,
Till, feebly, again, in each frozen vein
The life-blood ran; and the rescued man
Felt Death’s fingers releasing him.
His lips they bathed in the cordial cup,
And, alive at last, they lifted him up;
But leaving in Death’s grip, lost and gone
Life’s ransom — claim’d by the hungry cold,
Which had bitten his flesh to the very bone,
So that what remain’d of the man thus
saved
Was a ruin — horrible to behold,
On whose living flesh Death’s mark was
graved.

Then this living half of the half-saved man
The search after his lost friend began,

Whom he, and the Foresters, found at last
 Sunk in the drifted snow, beneath
 That desolate upland vague and vast,
 Dead — but beautiful in death.
 And over the dead man's face was cast
 The smile of the Sphinx : that smile which is
 The smile of indifference. Seeing this,
 He that saw it recall'd the past.

When, long since, they twain were young,
 And, as together they journey'd along
 Life's unknown, and yet untried, way,
 Love o'ertook them, and seized his prey,
 The dead man there, now calm, and fair,
 With a mighty effort had broken Love's snare,
 Giving to him, the survivor now,
 The selfsame counsel, to struggle on,
 He, himself, had refused, when he sank in the
 snow,
 And gave up the ghost ere the goal was won.
 Not so of yore ! when, with tears, he tore
 His tortured spirit from Love's control,
 But thus left forever behind him, lost,
 The finest and fairest parts of his soul,
 Saving the rest of himself at their cost.

Now, he lay dead, with the smile on his face ;
 Dead, but unblemished, and fair in death ;
 And, over his features calm, the grace
 Of a peace unbroken by mortal breath.
 Maim'd in feature, and crippled in limb,
 The living man look'd down upon him ;
 And, fair, in the dead man's face (with awe
 Because of its careless beauty) he saw
 The image serene of his own dead soul.
 Dead — but in death still beautiful !

LIV.

AN ILL-ASSORTED COUPLE.

I.

THERE was a couple who could not agree,
Tho' conjoin'd by a fate they were forced to
obey.

And of one of that couple the name was HE,
And the name of the other did HE call THEY.

II.

Different in age, as in all, were the two;
The youngest HE, and yet ages old;
THEY even older, and short of view,
As of hearing hard, if the truth be told.

III.

HE was resolved (and some sages say
It is man's best study) to study himself;
Taking small heed of his yokemate. THEY
Spared no abuse of the self-will'd elf.

IV.

"HE," said THEY, "is the bitterest brute!
A bear, — and his bearish actions show it."
Which opinion settled beyond dispute,
'Twas a miracle only could overthrow it.

V.

But falling sick, and recovering slowly,
HE grew as tame as a brute could be;
And, his rebel habits reforming wholly,
Meek and mild as a lamb was HE;

VI.

Doing whatever a lamb can do
To evince the virtues for which man love it:
Whilst THEY, disinclined to opinions new,
Cried "HE is a bear, and his actions prove it!"

VII.

Hard of hearing, and short of sight,
Thus THEY took . . . was it ten years, or
more?
To discover that all was at last lamb white
In the blackness so bearishly black before.

VIII.

Truth, however, will find her way
To the dullest brain, if you grant her time;
And so after thus chiming its ten years, THEY
Changed of a sudden this chiding chime.

IX.

"HE," at last said THEY, with no doubt at all,
"Is the sweetest soul. We have wrong'd him,
we;
And that was but honey we took for gall."
Meanwhile (what was it sour'd him?) HE,

X.

Because HE had tried and had fail'd to please,
Or because of original sin, once more,
A backslider, became by unblest degrees,
The unsocial bear he had been before.

XI.

Yet "HE," cry THEY, and still go on crying,
"Is the sweetest soul, and his actions show it!"
Do THEY believe it, or are THEY lying?
One thing only is sure. I know it.

XII.

Between a man and his reputation
There is a space to be travell'd thro':
And when rumor reaches its destination
The tale it tells is no longer true.

XIII.

Each ray of the star you are praising to-night
Hath been long on its way to your world
below:
And your praises, perchance, are bestow'd on
the light
Of a star that hath perish'd an age ago.



LV.

BETWEEN HAMMER AND ANVIL.

(A SONG OF THE IRON AGE.)

I.

THE bellows, breathing, fann'd the forge:
Forth sprang the thrill'd white sparks in
throngs:
The Young Smith from the furnace gorge
Pluck'd out between his pinching tongs,
And flat on the resonant anvil laid
The red iron, ablush with a radiant glow:
The Old Smith, dealing it blow on blow,
With his ponderous hammer the hot mass bray'd.

II.

And, whilst about it son and sire
In mutual mirth their business plied,
The iron, weeping tears of fire,
To hammer and to anvil cried,
“It is iron ye be, yet, O torturing two,
It is iron ye torture!” But “Suffer thy lot,”
They replied to him, “fool, and upbraid us not;
For there’s some one above us is dealing the
blow.”

III.

Oh had the Old Smith, whirling fast
His hammer, heard that talk? For, gay
He, thro’ the roar o’ the furnace blast,
Laugh’d “*Divide et impera!*”
“*Amen! Amen!*” the iron replied, giving vent
To a groan, as it grew to a sword. This, anon,
To its place in the arsenal pass’d: and the son
Of the Old Smith into the army went.

IV.

One day the town’s bad blood broke out.
The artisans arose in arms:
The Civic Guard they put to rout,
And fill’d the streets with fierce alarms.
But the soldiers came cantering into the town:
And, with patriot pride in so loyal a job,
Slashing this way and that as he rode thro’ the
mob,
A young soldier by chance the ringleader cut
down.

V.

“My son!” the giant gasp’d; and heard,
As grovelling in his gore he lay,
A captain, who had given the word,
Laugh “*Divide et impera!*”

“*Ámen! Ámen!*” the Old Smith responded;
 and died
 As the Young Smith, unnoticing, flourish’d his
 sword.
 Revolution was ended and order restored
 By the youth’s unintentional parricide.

VI.

The King then went to war. Long while
 His stricken subjects rued that day.
 The foeman gain’d by gold and guile
 One half the misruled realm away.
 Thus, against itself upon all sides turn’d,
 Did the gash’d land bleed at each gaping pore:
 They but meant it well, the two armies swore:
 Meanwhile they ravish’d, and robb’d, and burn’d.

VII.

And in the last great fight of all
 The Old Smith’s soldier son expired.
 His ribs were broken by a ball
 From his old Captain’s pistol fired.
 But, before the last breath of his life he breathed,
 He resolved, at the least, not to breathe it in
 vain;
 And the sword that erewhile had his father slain
 In the breast of his leader lost he sheathed.

VIII.

The conquering General rode that way,
 Glowing and fierce as Mars’ own Flamen,
 Laugh’d “*Divide et impera!*”
 And gallop’d onward. “*Ámen! Ámen!*”
 With a finger sly on his Golden Fleece,
 (While the General gave his mustache a twist)
 Responded the smiling Diplomatist
 Commission’d to settle and sign the Peace.

IX.

The Peace was sign'd : and, having wrought
The conquest thus confirm'd, elate,
The Military Party thought
Itself the master of the State.
But the Diplomat, hiding his own intent,
The Generals, jealous and fierce, inflamed
With a rival hope ; and the fools proclaim'd
A Republic ; that chose him as President.

X.

For, whilst with faction faction fought,
The moderate man slipp'd in between ;
The votes of either party bought,
And balk'd them both. More calm and keen
Than the rival chiefs that around him vied,
When the popular choice he had charm'd away
The rogue laugh'd "*Divide, impera !*"
Praising himself with a secret pride.

XI.

Yet, tho' so soft the whisper'd word
He, laughing in his sleeve, let fall,
Its secret boast one listener heard ;
Who, unobserved, observing all,
Behind him stood with a downcast eye,
And a serious smile on a meek lip set,
As "*Amen !*" he mutter'd, and softer yet
"*Amen !*" again, to his rosary.

XII.

The Young Priest, he, to whom by choice
The dame, whose charms in private bless'd
That charmer of the public voice,
The weakness of the flesh confess'd.

Thus craftsmen and soldiers and clerics and
 laymen
 Do the burden pass, as they pass their way:
 And the burden is *Divide impera!*
 And the response to it is *Amen! Amen!*

XIII.

Sic semper! Iron still is dashed
 On iron: blood on blood. The hours
 That rock the round world, rolling clashed
 From the high tops of temple towers,
 Are the hammers of Fate: and they fall and fall
 Heavy and fast on the anvil of Time;
 Where Humanity changes its shape as they
 chime,
 And, save only in shape, never changes at all.

XIV.

'Twixt hammer, thus, and anvil bruised,
 The wretch upbraids that torturing two;
 And they reply, the oft accused,
 "There's one above us deals the blow."
 Who is it, then? History's intricate page
 Can but reckon the strokes, and record the
 gravamen.
Stat pro ratione voluntas. Amen.
 This is the song of the Iron Age.



LVI.

HOMO HOMINI LUPUS.

I.

SOME villagers who in their trap had caught
 An old sheep-stealing wicked Wolf at last,
 Resolved that he to trial should be brought,
 And judgment in due form upon him passed.

And since no Counsel could avail him aught,
Because in fact his sentence was forecast,
The Court, considering his case a grave one,
Most graciously ordain'd that he should have
one.

II.

They might have hang'd or headed him at once
Without this legal circumbendibus,
Since he was in their power for the nonce.
But Justice loves, as cats do with a mouse,
Not to make all at once her final pounce
Without some fond preliminary fuss
Of indecision. So the Court decided
A Counsel for the Wolf should be provided.

III.

A man as full of learning as a book,
A scientific traveller much respected
By all the worthies of that rural nook
Where he a while was lodging, they elected
To this good office: which he undertook
Well pleased, since he for the accused detected
Much to be urged. No harm the Wolf had done
To flocks or herds of his. The man had none.

IV.

The Prosecutor's speech, as it behooved,
Was most laconically eloquent.
"For, since the Wolf's a wolf, my case is proved,"
Said he, avoiding needless argument.
Thro' no superfluous details he roved,
But to the point with plain precision went,
And cut his speech short, keeping to one head,
The Wolf's; which must be cut off too, he said.

V.

Upon the utterance of this demand
The Culprit's learned Counsel show'd his
teeth;
The Wolf's teeth, not his own, you understand.
And goodly teeth they were; above, beneath,
Two rows of daggers formidably plann'd
Their shining blades in flesh and blood to
sheathe.
"And you'll admit," he said, "one fact is plain:
Such tools were never made for grinding grain.

VI.

"But, as your shears for shearing wool were made,
Which is the purpose that you put them to,
So were the teeth set in this creature's head
For tearing flesh; and he employs them so.
What is there in such conduct to upbraid?
The Wolf is innocent. He does but do
As Nature bids him; whom obey he must.
Then cut off Nature's head, if you'd be just.

VII.

"This beast, moreover, ('tis no merit small)
Is one of the best parents in creation.
I, therefore, for the Wolf's acquital call,
With damages to boot, and compensation
From you his judges and accusers all,
For false imprisonment and defamation."
The Judges and the Jurymen were, each
And all, at first struck speechless by this speech.

VIII.

But soon, with sense of scandalized propriety,
They left the Wolf, his Counsel to assail;
For language quite subversive of society,
And doctrines which, if suffer'd to prevail,

Would place all honest folks in great anxiety,
Despise of gallows, constable, and jail.
Science escaped, sore bruised, from this affray,
And the sly Wolf, ill guarded, slipp'd away.

IX.

The Culprit and his Counsel being fled,
No case remain'd before the Court. "I ween
Never was such ill luck!" a Juror said.

"That rogue, the Wolf, would certainly have
been

Condemn'd on every count to lose his head,
But for this most discreditable scene.
For, what in our assemblies is so rare,
This time we were unanimous, I'll swear."

X.

"Friend," said another, "then you'll swear too
much.

Peter would still have voted against Paul:
First, since by nature, or by habit, such
His practice is; and next, since, after all,
He knew his counter-vote could work no touch
Of difference in the sentence, great or small.
Some men there be who vote in opposition
Always, with safety, upon this condition.

XI.

"The mischief is that, having now been told
By that subversive scientific knave
That he is in his natural rights, made bold
Thereby, the Wolf is likely to behave
With even greater license than of old;
And, fill'd with self-conceit, will fiercely crave
The free indulgence of a natural right,
To satisfy his wolfish appetite."

XII.

“Nay, neighbors,” said a third, “you are, indeed,
Too hard upon the Doctor. By the way,
Who was it, Martin, cured thy cough unfee’d?
Who mended Peter’s pump? And who, Paul,
say,
Taught thee, by crossing, to improve that breed
Whose fleeces fetch’d the highest price to-
day?
Ye took his counsel then, which now you spurn
Because, forsooth, it serves another’s turn.

XIII.

“He said the Wolf was right to be a thief,
And that is going far too far, say I.
But then, he added that the Wolf’s the chief
Of all good fathers of a family;
Which gives the lupine character relief.
That touch’d me, and should touch us all.
For why?
These dangerous characters have still a heart;
By which to win them is the statesman’s art.”

XIV.

So spake the Village Schoolmaster. He had
A numerous family himself. In all
Nine children, counting in the good and bad
Together, and the big ones with the small.
A fellow-father-feeling made him sad
That even a rascal’s family should fall
Into starvation; and his eyes grew dim,
For his own eloquence drew tears from him.

XV.

As for the Wolf, so far as can be guess'd,
Nothing by all this praise and all this blame
In him was alter'd. It must be confess'd
A common error to think words make tame
Or fierce such creatures. Wholly unimpress'd
By all our talking, they remain the same.
A wolf's a wolf: and nothing you can say
Will change him, tooth or teat, say what you
may.

XVI.

Good talkers, flatter not the hungry crowd.
All your soft words will butter it no bread.
Yet speak the truth, nor spare to speak it loud
For fear lest Hunger's clamor to be fed,
Acknowledged just, should wax too fierce and
proud.
Words change not facts. Friends, cut off Hun-
ger's head:
There'll be no wolves to fear, or flatter, then.
If not; beware of hungry wolves — and men!



LVII.

THE HORSE AND THE FLY.

I.

A HORSE-FLY stung a Coach-horse in the nose.
The Horse, with pain and terror of the bite,
Rear'd, and (despite the Driver's cries and
blows)
Upset the coach; and gallop'd out of sight.

II.

Side by side together, knitting
 Happy hand in hand, were sitting
 In the coach, when it roll'd over,
 Maiden-bride and Bridegroom-lover.
 By a pair
 More fond and fair
 Bridal vows were never spoken :
 And already rose in view
 The sweet home they were journeying to,
 When the Bridegroom's neck was broken,
 And the Bride's heart broken too.

III.

The Coachman, from the coach-box thrown,
 Dash'd out his brains on a bowlder stone.
 The honest fellow behind him left
 A widow and orphans five bereft.

IV.

Fast and faster the Horse, poor brute,
 Flying in vain from the feign'd pursuit
 Of the goading pang his own flesh hath in it,
 And fiercely quickening at each wild minute
 The impetuous speed of his desperate paces ;
 Whilst clamorous after him clatter the traces
 Which trail'd thro' a whirlwind of dust, he
 drags ;
 (With flat ears back laid, and red nostril flay'd,
 And flanks foam-oozing, that heave and smoke)
 Gallops into the town, gallops over the flags,
 Where, to left and to right in precipitous flight,
 He scatters the startled and terrified folk.

V.

After drifted blossoms straying,
Birds and butterflies waylaying,
Down the street a Child is playing :

Springing, singing, for pure joy,
All the world his pleasant toy;
A fair, rosy, bright-hair'd boy.

VI.

And the people shout, and the people cry :
And he hears the noise : but he knows not why
The others are shouting, and he shouts too,
For the joy of mere noise, as a child will do :
And the galloping horse gallops over him.
And that pretty Child (but a minute before,
Life's merriest minim, all mirth and whim)
Now a palpitant ruin bedabbled in gore,
With bright head bleeding and broken limb,
The people bear to his father's door.

VII.

That father's only child was he :
Lost heir to a princely pedigree :
Last fruit of an old ancestral tree.

VIII.

Alas, what sufferings from a single cause !
How many wrongs, how many miseries !
What misdeeds punishable by no laws !
Who was the guilty author of all these ?
The Horse ? But what responsibility
Have horses for their conduct, even when
No horse-flies bite them ? Not the Horse ?
The Fly ?
Well, but the Fly's misdeed ? what was it,
then ?

IX.

Maternal love that Fly obey'd.
 Her eggs in Nature's lap she laid,
 And, moved by mother-instinct, tried
 For her own offspring to provide.

X.

Maternal Love, then, must we call
 Sole author of these mischiefs all?
 If so (at least on moral ground
 Which some folks hold the only sound)
 Methinks 'tis easier (search and try them)
 To make laws than to justify them.



LVIII.

ET CÆTERA ET CÆTERA.

I.

SAW a man die, miserably. Death
 With lips disdainful of such sorry fare
 (Like one who sauntering thro' his orchard saith
 "The fruit, tho' flyblown, that lies rotting
 there,
 Must needs suffice me") nibbled the remains
 Of life; which long disease, with parching
 breath
 Had ravaged so, that Death was doubtful
 where
 To bite what look'd no longer worth his pains.
 Nought of the wretch was left but sores and
 brains.

II.

And nothing in this corpse-about-to-be
Seem'd living yet but life's last beacons, two
Bright feverish eyes, whence life defiantly
So fierce was flashing, that Death, fain to know
What meant their dumb defiance, render'd back
A moment's breath to set the man's lips free;
As hunters on a dying fire do blow
For light to guide them on their dubious track,
Ere they fare onward thro' the midnight black.

III.

Then, to Death's question, the death-rattle cried
"Long perishing I lived. On pain I fed.
I had no children, and I had no bride,
Like other men. But with Disease I wed,
And this, mine own death-hour, on her begot.
Yet all so well, against life's woes allied,
My solitary soul, from heel to head,
Was arm'd in patience, they subdued her not.
What she hath wrought can neither rest nor rot.

IV.

"For in me a sublime idea hath lived;
In me, and on me. What was I? Its food,
And dwelling-house. I perish: but it thrived,
And shall thrive. I have given it flesh and
blood.
That flesh and blood is mine. My whole life
long
Was for the good of this idea contrived,
And all mine ills have but increased its good.
Non omnis moriar! I still prolong
My power in this, whose life mine own made
strong.

V.

"For there it lives — in yonder leaves — complete!

Where yesterday these feverish fingers wrote
The last word: not what crowns the closing sheet

Of vulgar volumes with appropriate note:
Not FINIS, my life's labor's last word was.

Because I doubt not of my guerdon meet,

Because the life, whereto did I devote
Mine own life, here no mortal ending has,
Therefore my last word is *ÆTERNITAS*.

VI.

"Yes! mine idea shall live, bright, beauteous,
glad.

In me all's weak, but where is weakness here?
In me all's sorrow, here is nothing sad.

Clouded my life was, but my thought is clear.
The Spirit that thro' formless space did flit,
Seeking fit form, its budding purpose clad

In a child's brain, and breath'd in that child's
ear,

'Child, my thought chooseth for its servant fit,
Live for it, labor, suffer, die for it!'

VII.

"That child was I, and I obey'd. Alas,

I lived to die. But, dying, I set free
A life that's deathless. Into dust I pass

Content, because the thought that lived in me
Lives and shall live. 'Tis well. My work is
done.

FINIS for me: for it *ÆTERNITAS*!"

That was the man's last word. His work and
he

Are both forgotten. Underneath the sun
Nought is eternal save Oblivion.

VIII.

I saw a chrysalis. It hung beneath
 My lattice eaves. I watch'd with hopeful eye
 The bright release of that embodied breath,
 The dead worm's destined beauteous butterfly.
 I tapp'd it, and there came a hollow sound.
 In Sleep's similitude, already Death
 Dreaming the birth of a new life did lie.
 I broke its shining shell. And there I found
 Another chrysalis within it bound,

IX.

But swollen big, and just about to burst;
 A second and surprising chrysalis,
 Whose growth had eaten hollow all the first,
 Which it would soon have shatter'd. What
 was this?
 The egg of an ichneumon: who, within
 The moth-grub's miserable frame, had nursed
 Her bastard babe, and fed on borrow'd bliss
 Its being, buried in her victim's skin,
 Pierced, for that purpose, with a cloven pin.

X.

The first eruca, thus, the second fed. •
Sic vos non vobis! The poor moth-grub pined.
 The young ichneumon in the moth-grub led
 A prosperous life. Upon the patron dined
 The client, well. The moth-grub labor'd sore,
 And starved. The ichneumon lack'd not board
 or bed.
 The second flourish'd as the first declined.
 The moth-grub died. The ichneumon lived the
 more,
 Wanton and wing'd, and livelier than before.

XI.

Doubtless that moth-grub knew not its own state:
 Felt deep disquiet, and divined not why:
 Was proud, perchance, that in it something great
 Grew, and grew greater. Was it haunted by
 Ambitious dreams? Meanwhile with toil intense
 It must have labor'd, to emancipate
 The life within it. Thus, its enemy,
 And idol also in a certain sense,
 The poor fool fatten'd at its own expense.

XII.

And did it, when it wove its death-shroud, say
 (Poor worm, that ne'er a butterfly might be,
 Whose past was pinched, whose future filch'd
 away
 By that which lived within it!) even as he
 Whom I saw dying, did it say, "I pass,
 My work remains. The Spirit I obey,
 As fittest out of thousands, fixed on me
 For that sublime idea whose slave I was.
 FINIS for me: for it ÆTERNITAS!"

XIII.

Ah, "fittest out of thousands?" Yet behold!
 The ichneumon which upon this worm did
 prey
 Will find just such another worm to fold
 The egg it is its wont in worms to lay.
 And from that egg will soar another fly,
 Which, in its turn, will do as did the old.
 And thus *et cætera, et cætera*,
Et cætera, which, far as we can spy,
 Is also Latin for Eternity.

XIV.

Patience hath of ichneumons pointed out
As many as three hundred different kinds,
All living on as many kinds, no doubt,
Of different insects : as, on different minds,
Different ideas. Brains, we must avow,
The strongest, cannot yet *per annum* sprout
Three hundred new ideas ; and man finds
The old ones troublesome. But troubles grow,
And even the weakest brains breed notions now.

XV.

Meanwhile, whenever I behold a man
With burthen'd forehead, bald before his time,
And visage, like a lamp at noontide, wan,
Who thinks, by nourishing some thought sub-
lime,
To pay himself, in death, life's many pains ;
And, having spent his strength in prose or rhyme
On some idea which hath been the ban
Of all his being, boasts " My work remains,"
I muse " What maggot hath he in his brains ? "

LIX.

MONUMENTUM ÆRE PERENNIUS.

I.

Two neighbors from each other claim'd a field,
And neither of the two his claim would yield.
Wild words between them pass'd. These noth-
ing skill'd.
Blows follow'd words ; and one of them was
kill'd.

The dead man's kinsfolk then together came,
Sworn to do justice: and did just the same.
That is to say, they did a second time
What, done the first time, they had judged a
crime,

And slew the slayer. From these deaths arose
'Twixt tribe and tribe long strife of living foes;
Who in the dead men's quarrel fought, until
Which of the dead men did the other kill
Was by their hostile progeny forgot;
And neither side could quite remember what
Each side was fighting for, tho' generations
Prolong'd the conflict, and at last two nations
In arms opposed each other. The sole aim
And end of all such conflicts is the same,
Whether two peasants or two peoples fight:
Each from the other strives to wrest the right;
Each on the other strives to wreak the wrong;
And each, as both the varying strife prolong,
Is vanquished or is victor, turn about.
For, as "the whirligig of time" whirls out
Alternate chances, is the vanquished race
Avenged on the victorious. In this case,
Born of the conquer'd tribe, arose (men say)
After long centuries had roll'd away,
A conqueror: who, in half a hundred fights,
The wrongs of his slain fathers to the rights
Of their more fortunate sons converted; slew,
And led to slaughter, thousands; but o'erthrew
The overthrower, and to dust beat down
A secular oppression. Tower and town
Tumbled in smoky ashes, heaps of bones
Pashed and in a bloody puddle, gasps and groans
Of mashed-up men, a mass of different deaths
Mixed with a murmur of admiring breaths,
Founded the FIRST eternal monument
Which in men's memories made this last event
Imperishable; and, with gush of gore
And glory from men's minds forevermore

Wiped out the first, poor, perishable, mean
Cause of the conflict, which thereby had been
Crown'd with immortal claim upon the praise
And retrospective pride of after days.

II.

To many a lyre by many a lyrist strung,
About the land that hero's deeds were sung.
And many a homely lay, from door to door,
From sire to son, repeated o'er and o'er,
Transmitted to a far posterity
Traditions of his worth. But, rolling by,
Time, in its unretentive current, brought
New interests, new desires, to thrust from
thought

The rusted image of the Heroic Age;
Whereof this monument remain'd to wage
War with Oblivion. Vainly; till, by chance,
Its mouldering record caught the fervid glance
Of one who, haunted by a name forgot,
Raked in old legends long remember'd not
For glimpses of that name; which, like a star
Flashing mysterious splendor from afar,
Brighten'd the abysmal past. Its fading beams
This poet mingled with his own fresh dreams,
And wrought therefrom, to renovate renown,
A poem which the whole world for its own
Claim'd and forthwith immortalized. Thereof
(As, from the music of Amphion, rough
With topless towers, arose in circuit strong
The Theban ramparts raised by rolling song)
A new eternal monument was made:
Whose glory cast into oblivious shade
(Or in its brighter self absorb'd anon)
The lesser lustres of the former one.
For, from this fresh eternal monument
Gracing the threshold of an age, were sent
Memnonian melodies and echoes far,

Waked by the radiance of the rising star
Of a new art more beautiful than war.

III.

The old eternal monument, meanwhile,
Whereof nought rested but a ruin'd pile
Of names and dates (mere useless rubbish
reckon'd)
Had furnished forth foundations for the SECOND.

IV.

And all men deem'd the Poet's work to be
More lasting than the Hero's. Nathless, he
Who wrote the poem which, by men proclaim'd
Immortal, made its mortal parent famed,
Had died of want in some obscure small town.
Men search'd, in vain, the empire up and down
To find his birthplace; and, not finding it,
(Tho' many volumes were to help them writ,
Each volume proving hoplessly absurd
Whatever by the others was averr'd)
The baffled seekers by degrees began
To shape the ideal image of the man
Out of his song; imagining a face
And figure suited to his spirit's grace.
The State, then, order'd that this image, cast
In ever-during bronze, should be at last
Erected in the imperial capital
On a tall pillar; to be seen of all
Who there, throughout the ages, came and went.

V.

This was the THIRD eternal monument;
Which all the previous monuments effaced.
And the great poet's name, upon it traced,
Was read by multitudes who read no more
The old-fashion'd verses whence that name of
yore

Its immortality of fame received;
Which from Oblivion nothing new retrieved
Save the bronze image, on whose marble base
His name still figured, in the market-place.

VI.

Long while this third eternal monument
Struggled with time, and the wild weathers
bent
On its destruction. But it felt their strength;
And, bit by bit, the rain and rust at length
Wore out the graven words and sculptured
frieze.

The image, also, dwindled by degrees.
One day the lightning struck it, and it fell.
At least, so saith the civic chronicle
Which is our warrant (since we cannot show
Proof more conclusive) for believing now
That such a statue once commemorated
The birth (by modern critics much debated)
Of such a poet. Nowadays you see
A brave soap-boiling manufactory
Upon the spot where once that statue stood,
Which made immortal, for the multitude
That moved beneath it in the days gone by,
The poet's unremember'd memory;
Who sung the imperishable song; that wrought
Renew'd eternity in human thought
For that immortal hero's deathless name;
Whose perished immortality of fame
Rose from the reek of bloody towns ablaze,
Even as the smoke that rises nowadays
From yon tall chimney; which yet marks the spot
Where stood the statue men remember not.

VII.

These facts we have thought fitting to consign
In the foregoing record line by line,

To the attention of posterity;
 In order that we haply might thereby
 Save all these otherwise entirely lost
 Eternities; which mutually cost
 Each other's ultimate annihilation.
 Nothing remains of them, but this narration.

VIII.

And, if this last must be forgotten too
 (Leaving no vestige to the future) who
 Will owe its author (the FOURTH time, alas !)
 "A monument more durable than brass?"



LX.

SANS SOUCI.

PROLOGUE.

WORK! But when can I work, pray, when?

At morn? I have not yet done my doze.

At noon? But too heavy the heat is then.

At eve? But eve is the time for repose.

At night? But at night I'm asleep again.

Work? What is it? As I suppose,

'Tis the vain invention of idle men;

Whom the Devil could help to no happier plan

For getting thro' time, than this idiot trick
 Of adding fatigue to fatigue; like a man

Who carries his boots at the end of a stick
 Slung behind him, to add to the heat

And the weight on his back; as, with limping
 feet,

Thro' the flints that tear, and the thorns
that prick,
He fares barefooted, and boasts he can
With such bootless trouble get on so quick.
If you chanced, as you wander'd, to meet with
a brook

Flowing among the mountains, say
Would you hasten back to the house, and look
For a bucket to fetch the water away
Into the valley? Down from the hills
Let the water flow as the water wills.

When it gets to the valley at last, some day,
There will it stay, unashamed? or say
"To work! to work!" and begin with pain
To run up the hills and back again?
Enough is doing around it. Why
Should itself be doing aught? The sun
Reveals to it all that, up in the sky,
The weather is going to do, or hath done.
The moon will bathe in it by and by;
And the stars, that follow her one by one,

Seek and discover it,
Peeping thro'
Clouds that flow over it,
Changed in hue
By winds that o'erhover it,
Hid in the blue.
Barks, too, along it
From shore to shore
Will wander, and throng it
With sail and oar.
Each bending double,
With sweat o' the brow
From toil and trouble,
The rowers row,

But, how fast soever their oars may fall,
The water, which takes no trouble at all,
Will still be the first to leap to shore.
And, what is more, when the voyage is o'er,
Will still be as fresh as it was before.

Lie on the bank, then! idly lie
Beside me, watching the wave flow by.
And, if Fancy follow it, heed not why.
Heed not why, and heed not where.
Fancy will find in the summer air
Whatever she seeks, for her home is there.
Let us open our hearts to the summer sky.
From mine I have let this fable fly.
Who knows where it may 'light? Not I.

PART I.

There were two brothers. And each of the two
Said to the father of both "Let us go
Forth and away, O Father, from thee.
For the world is fair: and eager are we
To be living there, with a life set free."
And the Father said to his sons "Do so."
But, first (for a mighty magician was he)
"My sons," he said, "the world is wide;
What in it attracts you most, decide.
And then ask (ye shall get it) the gift of me
Which best for the choice of you each may be."
And "O Lord our Father," the sons replied,
"Even so! and to each, as the choice, be the
dower."

Then he carried them up where, in all its pride,
From the summit serene of a specular tower
Might be descried upon every side
The whole round world. And, opening at once
The magazines of his manifold power,
He said to them "Choose, and use, my sons."

The First made choice of a pair of legs.
Stout flesh and blood, no wooden pegs;
But legs of muscle and sinew strong,
That could do whatever a man's legs can.
"And with these," quoth he, "will I get along,"
As he put them on and became a MAN.

The Second laid hold on a sturdy root,
Pleased with its power of fixing fast;
Hid himself with it; and, shoot by shoot,
Became, tho' slowly, a TREE at last.

The man in possession of that stout pair
Of human legs, by the help of these
Trode many a road, scaled many a stair,
Climb'd the mountains, traversed the seas,
Braved strange weathers, and breathed strange
air,

Learn'd new manners, new languages,
Saw crowded cities, and deserts bare,
Felt the dogstar burn, and the polestar freeze,
Ransack'd earth for the far, the fair,
And yet nowhere on earth could the man find
ease.

For, wherever he thought to have settled, there
Something he noticed which fail'd to please,
Or something he miss'd which had pleased else-
where.

And the worse he fared the farther he went,
For comparison everywhere ruin'd content.
Those legs ran away with him: day by day
Wearing his life out; and wearing away
His boots; which to mend, he was forced to spend,
And, in order to spend, was forced to get,
And, in order to get, to earn by the sweat
Of his brow, the gold which in getting and
spending

The man wax'd old; still wearily wending
That way thro' the world whereunto is no ending.

PART II.

Long tired of that long way, he sank at last
Worn out upon the wayside sod, beneath
A mighty tree; whose branches o'er him cast
Shade that was shelter, haunted by the breath

Of hidden flowers. A rivulet flow'd past
From out-of-sight to out-of-sight; and, flow-
ing,
Call'd out calm sadness from the silence vast
Wherein hot noon was glowing.
Then did that old man feel thro' all his frame
A creeping rest. His legs, whose strength
was spent,
Left him at last in peace; and he became
Careless and conscious of a vague content.
But, while he follow'd with incurious gazes
The streamlet flowing where aught pleased it
best,
That melancholy, which in man's soul raises
Emotion born of rest,
Drew from the old man's eyes another stream
(Whose source was in his spirit) of sad tears.
And, as some spot which only in a dream
A man remembers, who forgets the years
That made it long forgotten, so to him
Return'd a memory of that mystic minute
When life's choice lay before him, with a dim
Desire of action in it.

"Alas!" he wept, "what wasted tears
Are these which weep my wasteful years!
And all this while, what have I done
But still from disappointment run
To disappointment? With what pain
What mountains have I climb'd in vain!
What flesh and blood these feet have left
On flinty peak, in thorny cleft!
How many a time these knees and shins
Have suffer'd for their owner's sins!
How often, falling bruised and sore,
With rage have I arisen once more,
To stumble on, I know not where
And know not how — such vagrants were

These worn-out legs! What have I gain'd,
Who, leaving all, have nought attain'd,
And nought have kept? I wonder how
It fares with my lost brother now."

PART III.

Then sound that, flowing, follow'd sound,
Rippled the leaves above him.
And the branches, bending down to the ground,
A canopied cradle wove him.

As still as a tired child that is taking
Sweet rest on its mother's knee,
The gray old man, neither sleeping nor waking,
Lay under the green old tree.

And was it brother speaking to brother?
For he heard the tender tone
Of a voice that seem'd not the voice of another,
Though he knew that it was not his own.

It was sweeter than all other voices are.
It was not like the voice of a man.
It seem'd so near, and yet seem'd so far,
And it spake as no other voice can.

PART IV.

Softly it murmur'd "Dost thou know me not,
My brother? I, the Forest, I am he,
The one friend left thee in earth's one safe spot,
Whose love, where'er thou wanderest, waits
for thee;

"Outlasting all things for the loss of which
That love is consolation: gold misspent,
Youth wasted, hope impoverished, to make rich
The thankless avarice of discontent.

“Love faithful, love unchangeable, and fast
As is the root whereby 'tis fixed and fed !
Vainly the world, wherein no root thou hast,
Thou wanderest seeking what, when found,
is fled.

“And think'st thou I am solitary? Thou
It is who art a wandering solitude.
For from thy life away thy life doth flow,
And, self-pursuing, thou art self-pursued.

“‘Not here,’ thou sigh'st, ‘I live, for life is there.’
Yet, hadst thou waited, life had come to thee,
Who, seeking life, hast miss'd it everywhere ;
Whilst here, where rest is mine, life sends to me

“Momently messengers, that know the way
To find me, from the world's four corners come.
The winds, and clouds, and stars of heaven, are
they,
And the sweet birds that to my heart fly home.

“Count me the emmets that go up and down
My creviced bark. Know'st thou what myri-
ads move
In any blade of grass o'er which is thrown
The shadow of my power and of my love ?

“What lurks and crouches under any stone
That nestles at my feet? What builds and
breeds
In my least berry? Or what deeds are done
Even by my least distinguishable seeds ?

“The Tree stands steadfast, contemplating all.
Tree-trunk from tree-trunk earth holds safe
and single :
But, weaving one ethereal coronal,
Tree-top, in heaven, doth with tree-top mingle.

“What buoyant bridges, which the squirrel
knows,
How airy light, how delicately wrought,
The elm-tree to his beechen brethren throws,
Where branch with branch is mixed, as
thought with thought!

“All this the Tree hath of the root he hath.
For whoso hath no root, no life hath he.
No path leads to him. And by every path
He from himself must needs a wanderer be.”

PART V.

Whilst thus the mystic voice yet spoke,
Harsher sounds thro' the forest broke.
And men came thro' it, and men came near,
With shoulder'd axe. “What do ye here,
Intruders?” — “Ho! we hew down wood.
Idler, make way for Work!” They stood
Under the tree; and the axe was laid
To the root thereof; and the tall tree sway'd
To and fro, and then crash'd to the ground.

The old man, stunn'd (but not by the sound)
About him gazed with bewilder'd eye
Over the alter'd earth and sky,
And “What is it,” he moan'd, “that is broken
in me?”

As he follow'd his brother, the fallen tree.

Follow'd the tree to the timber-yard:
Learn'd the craft of the carpenter:
Plied hammer and saw, and labor'd hard,
Laid plank upon plank, join'd oak to fir,
Till the stately vessel slid from the slips,
Slid from the land, and slid into the sea.
There, with those new-gotten wings of hers,
To wander the waters — a ship among ships,

Who no longer a tree among trees might be,
And (a mariner, there, among mariners) .
With the rest of the good ship's crew went he,
The man, not able to leave the tree.

PART VI.

On the sideless seas, in the middle hour
Of the savage and measureless night; when
 stars
By curdling clouds were quench'd, and a shower
Of stormy sleet thro' shrouds and spars
Shriek'd; and the grieved ship seem'd to cower
Under night's weight, as wild she ran
Across the cruel gray waves; the man
Lean'd his ear to the tree (which fast
Stood over him still, a mighty mast)
For the wood, with an inward moan, began
To writhe and heave: till there came at last
A thunderous buffet of wave and wind
That shatter'd the ship. And, swept by the
 blast
Into the murtherous midnight, blind
With madden'd weather, clinging together,
O'er the headlong sea the man and the tree
Drifted to shore on a desert isle.

The ship and the crew had perished meanwhile.
But the man was alive: and the tree (twice
 dead)
Which had saved him, still protected him.
For of part thereof, to shelter his head,
A roof he wrought; and each dripping limb
He dried and warm'd at the fire he made
Of the rest of the wood. And when morning rose
Over the reefs, with ravage spread,
As tho' on a world all newly made,
And smiling, safe from its last birth-throes,
In freshness, sweetness, light, and repose,

The man, left lone in the desert, said
" Oh what a release ! to be left in peace
By all that trouble of tiller and tackle,
The captain's cries, and the shipmen's cackle !
Each rope and sail, and yard and shroud,
That, in calm or gale, no quiet allow'd,
But must ever be shifted that way and this
For fear of shipwreck ; which, all the same,
In spite of our trouble and caution came.
And oh how delicious the freedom is
From all care henceforth of the cargo that's gone,
Or the ship, that is sunk, or the voyage, that's
done ! "

PART VII.

Years, long afterwards, mariners, driven
By stress of weather, touch'd on that isle,
Where their ship had found a natural haven
Hidden from howling storms. And while
The desert, in search of springs, they roved,
In the desert they found a fallen pile
Of spars and planks ; whose structure proved
That a human hand had fashion'd and hewn
That pile, long since by the sea-winds strewn.
And, under the ruins which once were a hut
(Safe from the ruining sea-winds shut)
A dead man lay. And the dead man's face
Yet wore, in its features worn, that trace
Which a life in the waste cannot all efface
Of a life once lived in busier lands.

The mariners buried with pious hands
That dead man's dust in the desert sands.
And, since they found two spars of a tree
Which none of the island trees could be
(Parts they seem'd of a broken mast,
Haply to shore with the dead man cast)

They set them, crosswise, above the grave
Of their fellow-creature; in sign of the faith
Which, finding but death in life, men have
That man's spirit is made for a life in death.

It was the last protection that the tree
Could give the man, his brother.
And ah, if helpless that protection be,
What help in any other?

Owen Meredith's

[ROBERT LORD LYTTON]

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